EARLY MODERN ENGLISH ALMSHOUSES IN THE

MIXED ECONOMY OF WELFARE c. 1550 – 1725

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Title page - Seal of King James' Hospital, Gateshead (image reproduced courtesy of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCA   Canterbury Cathedral Archives

CHC   Coventry History Centre

CKS   Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone (now the Kent History and Library Centre)

DCL   Durham Cathedral Library

DRO   Durham County Record Office

DULSC Durham University Library Special Collections

FACHRS Family and Community Historical Research Society

LRO   Lichfield Diocesan Record Office

MALSC Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, Strood

NA   National Archives, Kew

NRO   Northumberland Record office

SANT   Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne

SBT   Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Stratford-upon-Avon

WQS   Warwickshire Quarter Sessions

WRO   Warwick County Record Office

Summary

Almshouses providing accommodation for poor people are a common feature of the towns and villages of England, but in the historical literature are rarely considered to have made a genuine contribution to the poor and needy. This study examines the extent and nature of almshouse provision in early modern England, and places this within the context of overall approaches to the poor in the period. The archival research focuses on the contrasting counties of Durham, Warwickshire and Kent between about 1550 and 1725. Information on all the almshouse foundations in those areas is collated and summarised in an appendix, enabling both quantitative and qualitative evaluations to be made. A detailed analysis of the policy background to housing the poor provides the context for the study, and reveals that almshouses were initially seen as part of a national as well as local solution to the problem of poverty. Many of the diverse people involved in founding and running almshouses responded to this agenda, motivated by political responsibility and particular group identities, rather than just the desire for personal memorialisation. A case study of a single almshouse exemplifies the way this parish used the almshouse alongside other resources to meet the needs of the poor. Overall, there was a surprising variation in the socio-economic status of almshouse occupants and their experience of almshouse life. In many almshouses, occupants' standard of living was similar to that of other poor people, including parish paupers. The guaranteed nature of the benefits and security of the accommodation were, however, distinct advantages, and most almspeople were able to enjoy considerable independence and autonomy, with women possibly benefiting most. Over the period, however, statutory poor relief and the introduction of workhouses enabled almshouses to develop as more exclusive institutions, which were less embedded in local welfare systems.

1. Introduction

'Almshouse: a house founded by charity, offering accommodation for poor people'.[1]

In the small Warwickshire village of Leamington Hastings stands an early seventeenth-century stone building with the following inscription:

'Humphrey Davis Founder of these Almshouses dyed about the 28th Dec Anno Domini 1607 and gave his lands in Leamington Hastings, Barton and Ethorpe for the maintenance of an Almshouse and 8 poore people to be placed there forever, which lands were detayned from the said Almshouse by the space of sixe and twentie years and were this present yeare recovered by the assistance of Sir Thomas Trevor, one of his Majesty's Barons of the exchequer and Lord of the Manor of Leamington Hastings aforesaid at the prosecution of Matthew Over, Richard Walton, John Mason and John Clarke for the goode of the poore of Leamington Hastings aforesaid Anno 1633'.

The narrative conveyed in this lengthy inscription raises many questions: not least, who was the benefactor Humphrey Davis?; why did he found this almshouse?; who were the poor people who lived in it?; and what benefits might they have received? One might also ask: who were the five men named as rescuing the almshouse and why did they become involved in the way that they did? Almshouses like this one and others, some very much older, are a feature of many towns and villages across England; so how typical was this almshouse, and the circumstances its inscription describes? Despite their ubiquity, almshouses have attracted relatively little interest from historians. They are curious institutions, built by the rich to be lived in by the poor, tangible representations of philanthropy, and a visible demonstration of

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[1] Oxford English Dictionary.
http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/almshouse?q=almshouse (accessed 17 October 2013).

historic attitudes towards the poor. Yet they are strangely neglected in the historical literature on poverty and poor relief.

There is a very considerable body of research into the nature and scale of poverty in early modern society, and the responses to need which this prompted.[2] More recently, historians have been interested in the *experience* of poverty, in the lives of the poor themselves; in particular, how poor people managed, in Olwen Hufton's evocative phrase, in an 'economy of makeshifts', and how they negotiated their way through local welfare and charity systems.[3] Despite this interest, poor people's housing seems to have remained a 'known unknown' until very recently.[4] Little evidence survives to indicate the material lives of poor people in general, and their living conditions and accommodation in particular. Few examples of poor people's housing have survived, and there are very few contemporary descriptions or pictorial representations before the late eighteenth century. Until then, moreover, even commentators on the state of the poor rarely mentioned their

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[2] To pick out only the most prominent examples: E.M. Leonard, *The Early History of English Poor Relief* (Cambridge, 1900); Sidney & Beatrice Webb, *English Local Government vol. 7, English Poor Law History, Part I: The Old Poor Law* (London, 1927); Paul Slack, *Poverty in Early Stuart Salisbury* (Devizes, 1975); Paul Slack, *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1988); Steve Hindle, *On the Parish? The Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England c. 1550 – 1750* (Oxford, 2004); Marjorie Keniston McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England 1350 – 1600* (Cambridge, 2012).

[3] Tim Hitchcock, Peter King and Pamela Sharpe (eds), *Chronicling Poverty. The voices and strategies of the English poor, 1640 – 1840* (Basingstoke, 1997); Alannah Tomkins & Steven King (eds), *The Poor in England 1700 – 1850: an economy of makeshifts* (Manchester, 2003); Tim Hitchcock, *Down and Out in Eighteenth-Century London* (London, 2004); Steve Hindle, ' "Without the cry of any neighbours": a Cumbrian family and the poor law authorities, c. 1690 - 1730', in Helen Berry & Elizabeth Foyster (eds), *The Family in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 126-157.

[4] A recent collection of essays, *Accommodating Poverty,* conceived as a 'successor volume' to *Chronicling Poverty*, has attempted to address this omission. It includes, amongst others, chapters on rents and lodgings in London, poor people's dwellings in England and the colonies, parish housing, a parish workhouse, and a single contribution covering almshouses. Joanne McEwan & Pamela Sharpe (eds), *Accommodating Poverty. The Housing and Living Arrangements of the English Poor, c. 1600 – 1850* (Basingstoke, 2011).

houses.[5] Yet housing was a basic need; and contemporary settlement disputes and habitation orders, and the many prohibitions on the construction and subdivision of accommodation in a period of rising population, suggest that housing for the poor was a major and contested issue in early modern England.[6]

The invisibility of poor people's housing, in the historical literature as much as in the landscape, is at odds with its importance. Apart from its significance in the material culture of the poor, housing is much more than a matter of the roof over one's head. It is a fixed place, locating the occupants in geographical and social space; providing a stake in the local community, or excluding the occupants on the margins; giving individuals and families a stage on which to play the role of householder, parent, or dependent; and confirming the occupants' status, or lack of it, within the local hierarchy. Providing housing for the poor is therefore not just about physical shelter, but is freighted with meaning. The most well-known and documented examples of surviving houses for the poor are almshouses, yet they have rarely been considered as integral to discussions of poor relief or poor people's housing. There are thus two main strands to the relevant historiography: that of poor relief, in which almshouses do not generally figure prominently; and that of almshouses, in which too often the historical context is lacking or only superficially addressed. It has been argued that historians should adopt a 'holistic approach to understanding the Old Poor Law', on the basis that

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[5] Sarah Lloyd, 'Cottage conversations: poverty and manly independence in eighteenth-century England', *Past and Present,* no. 184 (2004), pp. 69-108.
[6] A.L.Beier, 'The Social Problems of an Elizabethan country town: Warwick, 1580-90', in Peter Clark (ed.), *Country Towns in Pre-Industrial England* (Leicester, 1981); John Broad, 'Housing the rural poor in southern England, 1650 – 1850', *The Agricultural History Review,* vol. 48, no. 2 (2000), pp. 151-170; William C. Baer, 'Housing the Poor and Mechanick Class in Seventeenth-Century London', *The London Journal,* vol. 25, no. 2 (2000), pp. 13-39.

charitable funds and statutory provision combined in practice to assist the poor in the early modern period, with parish poor relief the last resort until the late eighteenth century.[7] This project aims to adopt this integrated approach, in an attempt to understand the place of almshouses within the early modern welfare economy: why they were founded, who they helped and what they provided; and, ultimately, what contribution they made to the relief of the poor in early modern England.

The historiographical context spans the now very extensive literature on poverty, philanthropy and poor relief in early modern society. The extent of poverty in this period and the concern it caused contemporaries is well known, and the ways in which early modern society responded has provided a rich field for historians. Poverty was not a new phenomenon in early modern times. There had always been an obligation on Christians to relieve the poor, and historians of the late medieval period have shown that this was not just a responsibility met by the church, but by individuals and communities.[8] The early modern period, however, was characterised by an increase in the scale and extent of poverty, and increasing anxiety about how to deal with it as traditional responses proved ineffectual. The late medieval and early Tudor distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor, between the impotent and the idle, became complicated by the recognition of a third category created by demographic and economic changes – the labouring poor, those willing to work but unable to earn enough to sustain

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[7] John Broad, 'Parish Economies of Welfare, 1650 – 1834', *The Historical Journal,* vol. 42, no. 4 (1999), pp. 985-987.
[8] Elaine Clark, 'Social Welfare and Mutual Aid in the Medieval Countryside', *Journal of British Studies,* vol. 33 (1994), pp. 381-406; Peregrine Horden, 'Small Beer? The Parish and the Poor and Sick in Later Medieval England', in C. Burgess and E. Duffy (eds), *The Parish in Late Medieval England* (Donnington, 2006), pp. 339-364; McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England.*

themselves and their families. The changing nature and extent of the problem resulted in a gradual move away from purely philanthropic and ad hoc individual and communal responses to a more systematised, bureaucratic response through statutory poor relief administered by the parish. The detail, extent and pace of these changes are conveyed in an extensive literature.[9]

The traditional historiography used grand narrative arcs to describe responses to the poor in the past; variously identifying, for example, post-Reformation changes in the way the poor were regarded; a shift from religious to secular giving; from ad hoc doles to investment in institutions; and from private charity to parish relief.[10] But many current historians now emphasise the lack of coherence in the development of social welfare provision, and rehearse evidence for continuity alongside change. For instance, despite their historically significant theological differences there now appear to be similarities in practice between Protestant and Catholic responses to poverty; the acceptance of parish responsibility for the poor predates the Elizabethan era; and private charity continued alongside parish provision.[11] There has been an emphasis on bottom-up approaches, looking

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[9] The key text is Slack, *Poverty and Policy.* But see also Hindle, *On the Parish?* for rural England, and Steven King, *Poverty and Welfare in England 1700 – 1850. A Regional Perspective* (Manchester, 2000), which proposes that a regional division in approach and expectation had emerged by the eighteenth century.

[10] Susan Brigden, 'Religion and social obligation in early sixteenth-century London', *Past and Present,* no. 103 (1984), pp. 67-112; W.K. Jordan, *Philanthropy in England 1480 – 1660. A Study of the Changing Pattern of English Social Aspirations* (London, 1959).

[11] Robert Jütte, *Poverty and Deviance in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1994); Joanna Innes, 'State, Church and Voluntarism in European Welfare, 1690 – 1850', in Hugh Cunningham and Joanna Innes (eds), *Charity, Philanthropy and Reform* (Basingstoke, 1988), pp. 15-65; Marjorie McIntosh, 'Local responses to the poor in late medieval and Tudor England', *Continuity and Change,* vol. 3, no. 2 (1988), pp. 209-245; Joanna Innes, 'The "mixed economy of welfare" in early modern England: assessments of the options from Hale to Malthus c. 1683 – 1803', in Martin Daunton (ed.), *Charity, Self-Interest and Welfare in the English Past* (London, 1996), pp. 139-180; McIntosh*, Poor Relief in England.*

at the detail on the ground through micro histories.[12] This has included a recognition of the role of informal relief, including family and neighbourhood support, credit and hand-outs, in the survival strategies of the poor.[13] Motivation, entitlement, reciprocity, negotiation, communal values and social ties are considered as relevant to considerations of the operation of parish relief as to charitable activity, in what can be considered a 'mixed economy' of welfare. The result is a complex, multi-layered historiography.

Providing for the poor in early modern England was no doubt a messy endeavour, but despite this, patterns and developments do emerge. For example, although Marjorie McIntosh emphasises the early origins of many examples of local attempts at organised poor relief, she is also clear that the position in 1600 was undoubtedly very different from 1500, and argues that the reign of Edward VI was the critical period of change.[14] Slack detected a slow but inexorable shift from old forms of indiscriminate charity towards a more organised regime of endowed charity and public welfare.[15] In particular, the contribution made by parish poor relief undoubtedly rose during the seventeenth century. Tim Wales and others have demonstrated that the amounts of poor relief being paid out under the Poor Law were mostly insufficient to sustain life on their own, clarifying the residual and supportive rather than central role of relief in the economic lives of the poor. Yet he also showed that in the Norfolk villages he studied, relief was likely to increase to

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[12] Jeremy Boulton, *Neighbourhood and Society: a London Suburb in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 1987); Tim Wales, 'Poverty, poor relief and the life-cycle: some evidence from seventeenth-century Norfolk', in R.M. Smith (ed.), *Land, kinship and life-cycle* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 351-404; Broad, 'Parish Economies', pp. 985-1006; Steve Hindle, *The Birthpangs of Welfare: Poor Relief and Parish Governance in Seventeenth-Century Warwickshire,* Dugdale Society Occasional Papers No. 40 (2000); Hindle, *On the Parish?.*
[13] I.K. Ben-Amos, 'Gifts and favours: informal support in early modern England', *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 72 (2000), pp. 295-338; Hindle, *On the Parish?.*
[14] McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England,* pp. 130-2.
[15] Slack, *Poverty and Policy* , pp. 168-9.

become the sole source of income for a few people in the last years of their lives, and that the overall amounts of poor relief administered by these parishes had increased significantly in real terms by the end of the seventeenth century.[16]

The role of accommodation in the system of poor relief developing alongside private charity nonetheless remains a neglected area of research. The Tudor poor laws encouraged parishes to make provision for housing poor impotent people, and the many references in overseers' accounts and quarter sessions records to rent payments and habitation orders demonstrate how far this was implemented.[17] Not a great deal is known, however, about the kind of housing that was actually provided. Few historians have considered housing as a specific element in the range of early modern welfare provision. The exception is John Broad, who has highlighted the extent of parish provision, and demonstrated the importance that was attached to housing for poor people.[18] He argues that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries ordinary people upheld the right of poor families to a home of their own, even after workhouses were becoming

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[16] Wales, 'Life-cycle'. Richard Smith also found that parish pensions, supplementing wages, increased with advancing age, Richard M. Smith, 'Ageing and well-being in early modern England: pension trends and gender preferences under the English Old Poor Law c. 1650 – 1800', in Paul Johnson & Pat Thane, *Old Age from Antiquity to Post-Modernity* (London & New York, 1998), pp. 78-9. Lynn Botelho, however, suggests from her material that older people were discriminated against in the seventeenth century, receiving less in poor relief than younger people, L.A. Botelho, *Old Age and the English Poor Law, 1500 – 1700* (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 111-2.

[17] Dorothy Marshall, *The English Poor in the Eighteenth Century. A Study in Social and Administrative History* (London, 1926), pp. 107-111; Hindle, 'Birthpangs'; Hindle, *On the Parish?*. The earliest reference to housing the poor appears to be in the 1547 Act for the Punishment of Vagabonds and for the Relief of the Poor and Impotent Persons (1 Edw. VI c.3). This legislation is better known for its provision for the branding and enslavement of vagabonds. But it also included provision for weekly collections for the poor in the parish church, and for erecting cottages for the disabled. Although the vagrancy clauses were repealed two years later, the clauses relating to the disabled were not. (A.L. Beier, *The Problem of the Poor in Tudor and Early Stuart England* (London, 1983), p. 40).

[18] Broad, 'Housing'; John Broad, 'The Parish Poor House in the Long Eighteenth Century', in McEwan & Sharpe (eds), *Accommodating Poverty,* pp. 246-262.

common and despite the desire of parish elites to exercise control over the underemployed poor. Although focused on the later period and not discussing the origins of parish provision, Broad includes at least one example of parish housing which went back to a charitable bequest to the parish in the fifteenth century.[19] In addition, many parishes had church houses from before the Reformation, which had been used to house priests or hold church ales, some of which later became used to house paupers.[20] Although numbers are hard to ascertain, Broad suggested that in the southern counties which he examined 'a high proportion' of parishes owned or had access to a range of parish and charitable housing stock.[21] How almshouses fitted within this broad spectrum of provision is one of the issues this project hopes to address.

The Oxford English Dictionary definition of an almshouse is 'a house founded by charity, offering accommodation for the poor'. The medieval term was more commonly *hospital* (denoting hospitality), with *almshouse* being little used before the fourteenth century.[22] Other medieval terms included *God's House, Domus Dei, maison dieu, spital or spittle house, bede house, college,* or even, in a formulation unique to Lincolnshire, *callis* (thought to derive from the Staple of Calais). Marjorie Mcintosh and others draw a distinction between the functions of almshouses and hospitals in late medieval times. For instance, McIntosh describes hospitals as offering

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[19] Broad, 'Housing', p. 163.
[20] Patrick Cowley, *The Church Houses* (London, 1970); E.H.D. Williams, 'Church Houses in Somerset', *Vernacular Architecture,* vol. 23 (1992), pp. 15-23.
[21] Broad 'Housing', p. 170. In his later contribution, Broad uses the sale of parish poor houses as a result of the 1834 New Poor law to calculate a possible 29,000 houses owned by English parishes by 1834, with access to a possible further 4,800 charitable houses, Broad 'Poor House', p. 259.
[22] Brian Howson, *Almshouses: A Social & Architectural History* (Stroud, 2008), p. 14.

'accommodation and simple bedside care' to the bedridden, sick and old, while almshouses 'usually served the elderly poor, providing permanent free housing and sometimes food, clothing, fuel, or a weekly cash stipend'. However, as she recognises, 'neither category was clearly defined'.[23] In fact, the distinction would appear to be an artificial one. Certainly, by the early modern period, the terms *almshouse* and *hospital* were being used loosely and interchangeably to denote any accommodation which housed people receiving 'alms' or relief. This project therefore adopts a broad approach, encompassing any form of charitable provision which contemporaries called an almshouse (or hospital). As a consequence, it includes a considerable range of accommodation and a variety of types of institution. Some foundations are difficult to distinguish from church or parish housing, particularly those poorer foundations effectively being run by parish elites, but it may be that even this distinction is an artificial one.

Much of the provision which towns and parishes had at their disposal to carry out their functions, such as assisting the poor, had its origins in charitable bequests. Many of these bequests were supported in fulfilling their objectives by a multitude of further donations, through the parish poor box or church rates for instance. The almshouses founded by the guilds and livery companies might be built as a result of a single bequest, or by levies upon the membership in the form of voluntary, or even compulsory, taxation. For instance, the pre-Reformation Trinity Almshouses at Deptford were built and maintained by a compulsory levy on mariners.[24] The introduction of compulsory parish poor rates in the second half of the sixteenth century

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[23] McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England*, pp. 7, 61.
[24] Alwyn A. Ruddock, 'The Trinity House at Deptford in the Sixteenth Century', *English Historical Review,* vol. 65, no. 257 (1950), pp. 465-6.

added yet another source of funding, which in some places was used interchangeably with charitable funds. The result was considerable overlap between private charity and public provision, a distinction itself which, according to McIntosh, would have 'puzzled Elizabethans'.[25] As an example, albeit a particularly complicated one, the eighteen parish almshouses of St Martin in the Fields, London, built between 1683-6, consisted of six separate foundations, some endowed by named individuals, some by anonymous subscribers, and some built by the parish to replace earlier parish almshouses. The stipends for the almswomen derived from three separate sources including the parish rates; while some of the women had their pensions paid by the overseers, and others by the churchwardens.[26] In this example, distinguishing between public and private charity would seem singularly fruitless; and it is only by including, as this study aims to do, the whole spectrum of almshouse provision, that a true understanding can be reached of how almshouses featured in their local economy of welfare.

There is a growing body of literature on almshouses, but much of this tends towards the descriptive rather than the analytical, and is rarely integrated within any part of the complex poor law historiography. Individual almshouses, particularly those of ancient foundation, have often attracted local interest, and a few celebrated endowments have been covered by a detailed monograph.[27] Several general histories or surveys of almshouses

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[25] Marjorie McIntosh, 'Networks of care in Elizabethan English towns. The example of Hadleigh, Suffolk', in Peregrine Horden & Richard Smith (eds), *The Locus of Care. Families, communities, institutions and the provision of welfare in antiquity* (London, 1998), p. 72.
[26] Jeremy Boulton, *The Almshouses and Almswomen of St Martin in the Fields, 1684 – 1818,* paper presented to the Almshouses in Europe conference, Haarlem, The Netherlands, 7 September 2011.
[27] For example: Patrick Joyce, *Patronage and Poverty in Merchant Society. The History of Morden College, Blackheath 1695 to the present* (Henley-on-Thames, 1982); Stephen Porter, *The London Charterhouse* (Stroud, 2009); Nigel Goose & Leanne Moden, *A History*

have also been published, mainly focused on foundations with surviving buildings of architectural or aesthetic interest, and with, at times, only a superficial interpretation of the historical context.[28] Some of these general works are arranged chronologically to describe the development of almshouses over time, but only the medieval period has, to date, warranted specific attention.[29] Post-Reformation foundations, despite their ubiquity, have not received similar attention. Some of the general histories, such as those as old as Clay (1909) and as recent as Bailey (1988), include an impressive amount of detail on the range and diversity of foundations, but are marred by an almost complete absence of footnotes. Clay, moreover, treats the medieval period as a single, undifferentiated time-period, albeit one covering many centuries, and this results in the loss of any historical frame of reference or sense of progression and development in the founding and running of medieval hospitals.

There are also an increasing number of county or regional surveys, which have the advantage of including most or all known institutions for their

locality.[30] Local and regional studies often reveal interesting information on a far wider range of institutions than is generally known to have existed. For instance, Linda Crust's survey of Lincolnshire reveals that there was a large number of very small foundations in that county, often providing accommodation for no more than two, three or four almspeople. She notes, for example, that three dilapidated cottages at Willingham by Sow were known as 'almshouses' into the twentieth century, although they had no known endowment; she comments: 'there must be many cases of such 'unofficial' almshouses (usually maintained by the parish) in Lincolnshire villages'.[31] Unendowed charitable foundations and parish or church housing, though less substantial and by their nature less likely to have survived, seem to have been more widespread than has generally been recognised, and may have made a real contribution to the welfare of the poor in early modern England. One contention of this study is that our modern understanding of almshouses as foundations with a permanent endowment and independent existence may be unduly restrictive for the early modern period.[32] Our current knowledge, however, is heavily influenced by an emphasis in the literature on the wealthier foundations which are more likely to have surviving buildings and archives. These are not necessarily typical of the genre. The concentration on those institutions with architecturally interesting buildings,

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[30] For example: Elizabeth O. Cockburn, *The Almshouses of Dorset* (Dorchester, 1970); Linda Crust, *Lincolnshire Almshouses. Nine Centuries of Charitable Housing* (Sleaford, 2002); Helen Caffrey, *Almshouses in the West Riding of Yorkshire 1600 - 1900* (Kings Lynn, 2006); Sylvia Watts, *Shropshire Almshouses* (Woonton Almeley, 2010); Carole Smith, *The Almshouses of York* (York, 2010); Elizabeth Anne Earl, *Nottinghamshire Almshouses, from early times to 1919* (self-published, 2011).

[31] Crust, *Lincolnshire Almshouses*, pp. 27-44, 46.

[32] Patricia Cullum addressed a similar problem in her study of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century maisons dieu in Yorkshire:' "For Pore People Harberles": What was the Function of the Maisondieu?', in Dorothy J. Clayton, Richard Garfield Davies, Peter McNiven (eds), *Trade, Devotion and Governance: Papers in Late Medieval History* (Stroud, 1994), pp. 36-54.

arcane rules and surviving documentation has tended to favour elite institutions which do not represent the great majority of almshouse foundations.[33] Howson, for instance, acknowledges the contribution of the many parish fraternities and guilds which ran almshouses as part of their local charitable provision, and their successors, the 'hundreds of small local charities…scattered throughout the land'; but small local foundations are not those which interest him. By his own admission his work 'covers mainly the largest and best-documented institutions'.[34]

Much of this almshouse literature, moreover, has focused primarily on the architecture of surviving almshouse buildings.[35] For instance, Elizabeth Prescott used the architecture of medieval hospitals to trace changes and developments in their function, while Sidney Heath conceded that he chose his examples principally for their 'architectural or picturesque qualities'.[36] For many of these establishments, a main purpose of their spectacular buildings appears to have been the memorialisation of the founder; and this function usually takes precedence in the literature over any consideration of the actual accommodation provided for the almspeople. The grand architecture of such establishments, with their halls, chapels, audit rooms and quadrangles, may be interesting in itself, and certainly lends itself to discussion of the use of power and space, but it also gives a distorted portrayal of the generality of almshouses. More typical is the vernacular architecture of the ubiquitous rows of simple cottages which characterise the

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[33] For a more balanced approach, see Caffrey, *West Riding*.
[34] Howson, *Almshouses*, pp. 11, 27-8.
[35] For example, Sidney Heath, *Old English Houses of Alms. A Pictorial Record with Architectural and Historical Notes* (London, 1910); Godfrey*, English Almshouse*; Bailey, *Almshouses*; Howson, *Noble Poverty*.
[36] Prescott, *English Medieval Hospital*, p. 4; Heath, *Old English Houses*, p. 12.

majority of almshouses, but which make little appearance in the literature. The nineteenth-century antiquarian and architect F.T. Dollman identified four traditional building types associated with medieval almshouses and hospitals, namely: the infirmary hall, with or without attached chapel; cruciform layout; and courtyard.[37] Howson uncritically adopted the same categorisation for all almshouses, to the extent of declaring that 'the courtyard form was adopted as the most common type of development for almshouses during the next five hundred years or so'.[38] One has only to look around at the very many surviving almshouse buildings, the majority of which appear to be in the form of simple buildings or rows of cottages, to recognise that this is not true.

Most writers, like Howson, have assumed that almshouses in all their forms are direct descendants of medieval hospitals.[39] Whether true or not, this may be of little help in understanding the nature of post-medieval hospitals. In the late medieval period there was already a considerable variety of foundations providing accommodation for the impotent poor. Some were attached to monastic institutions, or were themselves religious foundations; some were chantries where the almspeople's function was to pray for the soul of the benefactor; but many were entirely secular institutions founded by individuals for defined groups of poor, or by guilds for the benefit of their members. The dissolution of the monasteries, chantries and religious fraternities at the Reformation resulted in the loss of many medieval

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[37] F.T. Dollman, *Examples of Ancient Domestic Architecture: illustrating the hospitals, bede-houses, schools, almshouses, etc. of the middle ages in England* (London, 1858).
[38] Howson, *Noble Poverty*, p. 53.
[39] For instance, Bailey, *Almshouses*, p. 16; Howson, *Noble Poverty*, p. 17; Hallett, *Almshouses,* p. 6; Caffrey, *West Riding*, p. 8.

hospitals.[40] Those that survived were mainly the secular institutions or those which could be refounded in secular form. This discontinuity suggests that the origins of early modern almshouses may more properly lie not with the monastic institutions but with the mainly secular foundations, of which there are many survivors from the fifteenth century. It leaves unexplored other possible precursors in late medieval developments such as guilds and colleges, and also early housing provision by parishes and manors, for which there appear to be fleeting references but little documentation.

The question also arises of why medieval almshouses survived at all, and why so many new institutions were founded in the early modern period, at a time when the implementation of statutory relief for the poor was becoming solidly embedded in the process of local government. Despite (or because of) contemporary anxieties about a decrease in charitable giving, private charity survived and in many cases flourished after the introduction of compulsory poor rates. Casual doles undoubtedly declined, but endowed charity, in particular, appears to have increased exponentially. W.K. Jordan's monumental works on English philanthropy detail all testamentary charitable bequests from the years 1480 – 1660 in ten English counties (including London and Bristol).[41] Jordan took as his thesis the change in 'men's aspirations for their own age and for generations yet to come' from primarily religious preoccupations to more modern secular concerns.[42] He regarded almshouses as amongst those permanent, endowed charitable institutions

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[40] McIntosh, 'Local responses', p. 228, judged that at least half of existing institutions were closed between 1536 and 1549. In her more recent work, however, her assessment is that two thirds of foundations survived the dissolution, McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England*, CUP Online Appendix 2: Number of institutions founded, closed, and in existence per decade.
[41] Jordan, *Philanthropy*; W.K.Jordan, *The Charities of London 1480 – 1660* (London, 1960); *The Charities of Rural England 1480 – 1660* (London, 1961).
[42] Jordan, *Philanthropy*, pp. 15-16.

through which merchant and gentry benefactors attempted to revolutionise the approach to poverty and need, describing them as 'carefully ordered institutions offering sanctuary to the socially and economically derelict…applauded by the best and most sensitive men of the era'.[43] Jordan's problematic use of the word secular was intended to convey *lay* rather than *ecclesiastical* concerns, rather than non-religious ones. As he acknowledged, the role of religion and personal piety remained powerful drivers in much of the philanthropy of the age. Jordan's assumption of increasing secularisation has been the subject of well-worn criticisms.[44] Similarly, his figures for the remarkable increase in secular endowments he claims for the early years of the seventeenth century have been severely challenged, most particularly for deliberately ignoring the effects of inflation and population growth.[45] But, as Slack points out, endowed charity, if it survives, is cumulative in effect, so it is possible to see a real growth in the seventeenth century in charitable provision such as almshouses.[46] This is relevant to any consideration of the impact of almshouse foundation on welfare provision. Despite the criticisms which have been levelled against Jordan's methodology and figures, it is perhaps surprising that there has been no subsequent attempt to build on his survey of foundations from the early modern period.

Since Jordan, there have been relatively few scholarly studies which include a comprehensive consideration of early modern almshouses and the role they played in contemporary approaches to the poor. The notable

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[43] Ibid., p. 41.
[44] See, for instance, the critique in Hindle, *On the Parish?*, pp. 98-9.
[45] For instance, D.C. Coleman, 'Review: W.K.Jordan, Philanthropy in England', *Economic History Review,* Series 2, vol. xiii (1960-1961), pp. 113-5.
[46] Slack, *Poverty and Policy*, p. 163

exception is McIntosh's work on poor relief, focusing on the period of transition from medieval to early modern society. Both of her most recent studies devote substantial sections to almshouses and hospitals, (although only up to 1600).[47] McIntosh argues that in those places where they existed, almshouses played a small but significant part in the care of the elderly poor, describing them as 'a touchstone of concern with life-cycle poverty'.[48] Few other historians of poor relief in the period have included almshouses, or have considered them to have made much of a contribution to the genuinely poor and needy.[49] Slack's often-cited reference to almspeople as 'respectable, gowned, Trollopian worthies' is typically dismissive.[50] Partly this stems from the emphasis, in much of the existing literature, on the wealthier, better documented foundations whose residents were probably not representative of the genuinely poor and needy. Newer, more detailed work such as this project, which includes a wider range of provision including smaller, poorer almshouses, may correct this perception over time. But it is also possible that a measure of unconscious discrimination has influenced the choices of historians in the past, with the deserving poor being

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[47] McIntosh, 'Local responses'; Marjorie McIntosh, *A Community Transformed: The Manor and Liberty of Havering, 1500 – 1620* (Cambridge, 1991); McIntosh, 'Networks of care'; Marjorie McIntosh, 'Poverty, Charity and Coercion in Elizabethan England', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History,* vol. XXXV, no. 3 (Winter 2005), pp. 457-479. As well as detailed local studies of Havering and Hadleigh, McIntosh attempts to provide an overall assessment of numbers of institutions lost through the Reformation, and the numbers of new foundations in the Elizabethan period, McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England,* pp. 186-224, and CUP Online Appendices 1 & 2. Marjorie Keniston McIntosh, *Poor Relief and Community in Hadleigh, Suffolk 1547 – 1600* (Hatfield, 2013), includes mini biographies of twelve late sixteenth-century residents of Hadleigh's almshouses, pp. 175-6.

[48] McIntosh, 'Local responses', p. 221.

[49] Boulton and Schwarz, for instance, include a single paragraph on the fifty-five to eighty almswomen who occupied the St Martin-in-the-Fields parish almshouses, and state that there was little overlap between them and workhouse occupants. Jeremy Boulton & Leonard Schwarz, '"The Comforts of a Private Fireside"? The Workhouse, the Elderly and the Poor Law in Georgian Westminster: St Martin-in-the-Fields, 1725 - 1824', in McEwan & Sharpe (eds), *Accommodating Poverty,* p. 235.

[50] Paul Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement. Public Welfare in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999), p. 25.

considered less interesting than the deviant, respectable independence less valid a topic than incarceration, and old age considered as unattractive and unrewarding for historians as in life. The more recent interest by a number of women historians in the study of old age, for example, is a hopeful indication of a shift in focus.[51]

This change is also reflected in a growing interest in the social significance of almshouses, and in the contribution they might have made to the lives of the poor, which is in contrast to the mainly antiquarian perspective of the past. This has led to a new focus on almshouse occupants and the experience of almshouse life. Alannah Tomkins, for instance, in one of the few studies of almshouse dwellers between 1650 and 1850, demonstrates the great variation in material benefits which different almshouses provided. She also attempts to understand the 'emotional freight' attached to an almshouse place, why admission should have been considered desirable despite the sometimes meagre material benefits received.[52] The recognition that there were wide variations in the wealth and status of both founders and the institutions they endowed should help to revise received opinion on almshouses and the place they occupied within the 'welfare economy' of their communities. Similarly, examining the different experiences of almshouse life amongst this defined category of poor people, can enrich our understanding of the material lives of the poor, and set this

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[51] Pat Thane, *Old Age in English History. Past Experiences, Present Issues* (Oxford, 2000); Lynn Botelho and Pat Thane, *Women and Ageing in British Society since 1500* (Harlow, 2001); Botelho, *Old Age*; Susan Ottaway, *The Decline of Life. Old Age in Eighteenth Century England* (Cambridge, 2004); Pat Thane, *The Long History of Old Age* (London, 2006).
[52] Alannah Tomkins, 'Retirement from the Noise and Hurry of the World? The Experience of Almshouse Life', in McEwan & Sharpe (eds), *Accommodating Poverty,* pp. 263-283.

within the wider historiographical interest of recent decades in the experience of poverty in early modern England. [53]

This project commences from the standpoint of this new approach to the study of almshouses. The research aims to examine the extent and nature of almshouse provision in early modern England, and try to understand this in the context of overall approaches to the poor in this period. Contemporary attitudes to the poor generally, the nature and availability of alternative forms of welfare provision, and their potential impact on the character and desirability of almshouse provision, are essential parts of this context. There is, of course, also a European context, in which almshouses and poor relief appear to have taken forms which differed in many ways from their counterparts in England, making comparison difficult.[54] For instance, in a recent study comparing English and Dutch almshouses, it is not absolutely clear that the English almshouse and the Dutch *hofje* (literally, small courtyard) under discussion were the same kind of institution, both being distinct from the parish poor house in England and the *oudemannenhuis* (old men's house) and *oudevrouwenhuis* (old women's house) of the Dutch Republic.[55] While there were these parallel developments in Europe, nevertheless the particular circumstances of the English Reformation and the evolution of a tax-based poor relief system,

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[53] The Family and Community Historical Research Society's Almshouse Project is an example of the new interest in almshouse provision. The project was set up in 2007 using volunteers to collect information on almshouses for a national database and to write about their findings. The book of the project is currently in production, and will include both local and thematic studies, for instance on almshouse rules, clothing and possessions. Nigel Goose, Helen Caffrey & Anne Langley (eds), *New Perspectives on Philanthropy: The British Almshouse 1400 - 1914* (forthcoming).
[54] Slack, *Poverty and Policy*, pp. 8-14.
[55] Nigel Goose & Henk Looijesteijn, 'Almshouses in England and the Dutch Republic *circa* 1350 – 1800: A Comparative Perspective', *Journal of Social History,* vol. 45, no. 4 (2012), pp. 1049-1073.

together with the impact these had on the survival and characteristics of almshouses as a form of welfare provision in England, provide the focus for this project.

Chronologically, the parameters for the study will be loosely from 1550 to 1725. The period begins after the dissolution of the religious houses, guilds and chantries, and after the legislation of 1547 which established the principle of parishes providing cottages to house disabled people. It continues into the early eighteenth century, up to the legislation of 1723 introducing workhouses as the preferred solution to the problem of the poor, legislation which gave overseers the right to deny relief to poor people refusing to enter a workhouse. The contention is that early modern almshouses were not just a continuation of their medieval predecessors, despite the emphasis by historians such as McIntosh on continuity between the medieval and Tudor periods, but took on a distinct identity. As part of a mixed economy of welfare, moreover, they were likely to continue to be shaped by developments in other sections of the welfare system. The research intends to address the gap between the sixteenth-century perspective of McIntosh, and the later work of Tomkins and Boulton whose focus is largely on the eighteenth century. Tomkins comments on how difficult it is to assess whether there was change over time in the character of almshouse life because the evidence is dispersed geographically and chronologically.[56] This project aims to have both a geographical and chronological focus, in order to bring together the available evidence in a co-ordinated way which allows judgements to be made about the place of

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[56] Tomkins, 'Retirement', p. 278.

almshouses within the early modern welfare economy, and to assess whether this changed over time.

Methodology - three county studies

There is no scholarly survey of post-Reformation almshouses to match the work of Clay or that of Orme and Webster for the middle ages, and it was obviously beyond the scope of this project to conduct a comprehensive, nation-wide survey of early modern almshouses.[57] Instead, the approach adopted has been to select three contrasting English counties, Durham, Warwickshire and Kent, - representing the north, midlands and south of England respectively - and use them as the focus of the research. For each of the three counties there exists a range of archives and a body of secondary literature, and each has been covered by a volume in the British Record Society Hearth Tax Series. Using these, the aim was to identify all the almshouses existing in the three counties between 1550 and 1725, whether new foundations or medieval survivors, and undertake as comprehensive an approach as possible to researching these establishments. The reports of the early nineteenth-century commissioners into charities formed a useful starting point in each county.[58] A small number of almshouses have surviving records, and these were supplemented by the far greater volume of fragmentary archival and secondary material in local record offices, including that to be found in parish overseers' and churchwardens' accounts and town corporation minute books.

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[57] The Family and Community Historical Research Society hopes eventually to make all the information collected by the Almshouse Research Project (see note 53) available in an on-line database, but this is still some way from completion.

[58] House of Commons Parliamentary Papers (HCPP hereafter).

The three counties are not in themselves intended to form the basis of detailed individual studies or systematic comparison, but provide the material from which a wider picture can be constructed. Orme and Webster justify their inclusion of a regional study of Devon and Cornwall in their monograph on the medieval hospitals on the basis that national studies are 'selective and anecdotal', whereas studying a smaller area in depth enables a more thorough search of possible sources to be undertaken and a more detailed interpretation of relevant data.[59] Certainly, some of the richest material has been uncovered in studies of single institutions or small local areas, but such examples are not necessarily typical or capable of wider application. The purpose of focusing in this project on three separate and contrasting geographical areas is an attempt to overcome this, and avoid both impressionist generalisations and fixation on peculiar contexts. Furthermore, the intention to compile as comprehensive a picture as possible of all the foundations in these three locations is designed to counterbalance the temptation to focus only on the better-known institutions.

A total of 123 almshouses was identified for the three counties, comprising 29 surviving pre-Reformation almshouses, and 94 others founded between 1550 and 1725. These are shown in Appendix 1, which collates and summarises surviving information from the identified almshouses, including, for instance, who the almshouse was for ('type of inmates'), what the accommodation consisted of, whether the almshouse was endowed or not, and whether stipends were above (A) or below (B) a minimum subsistence level (see chapter 5 on the benefits of an almshouse place). This data forms

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[59] Orme & Webster, *English Hospital*, p. 169.

the empirical basis for the tables and the analysis in the text. The definition of an almshouse in the Oxford English Dictionary, 'a house founded by charity, offering accommodation for poor people', serves as an appropriately broad frame of reference; in essence, if contemporaries called it an almshouse (or hospital) then it has been included. This has resulted in the discovery of a number of quite humble foundations of a type likely to have been common across England, but usually overlooked in the literature. Their inclusion in this project has made it possible to examine what sort of institution was regarded as an almshouse by contemporaries in the period under consideration, and whether this changed over time, untrammelled by more modern and possibly anachronistic ideas of what an almshouse was. Inevitably, the information on many foundations is fragmentary at best, with very few foundations providing sufficient material to give a consistent history of their existence. Many foundations no longer survive, or do so in such a changed form that it is impossible to recreate an accurate picture of their existence in the period under consideration. The paucity of information for some foundations, moreover, made it difficult to subject the material to a completely rigorous statistical analysis, although a number of general points do emerge. In addressing the research questions, therefore, an attempt has been made to marry a broad brush statistical overview from the three counties with more detailed, qualitative information from individual almshouses in these areas, supplemented by appropriate examples from elsewhere.

The three counties proved to be markedly different. County Durham by the end of the seventeenth century was by no means the 'isolated

northern backwater' it had been deemed in the sixteenth century, as the expansion of the coal trade through the seventeenth century transformed the county's industrial and agricultural economies. It was, however, not especially prosperous, and it was a long way from the centre of government. There were comparatively few great families; the gentry were sparsely spread; and the bishopric dominated both land and office holding.[60] Warwickshire, located at the centre of England, was, in the early modern period, far enough from London to be beyond the orbit of the court, but not so far as to be entirely remote from the metropolis. It had few great landowning magnates, and many of the seventeenth-century gentry were relative newcomers to the county.[61] The influence of the church was weak, with the county divided between the dioceses of Lichfield and Worcester. Kent, on the other hand, was a large and populous county, seat of the archbishopric, closely linked to the centre of government and the City of London, and with close ties to the continent. In the approach to poor relief, Kent was in advance of much of the country. Many Kentish towns were 'early adopters' of organised systems of relief, often taking the lead in formulating policy and providing the government with templates for national legislation. Unsurprisingly, there was a great difference in the number of early modern almshouses identified in the three counties, as shown in Table 1.1.

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[60] Adrian Green, Elizabeth Parkinson, Margaret Spufford (eds), *Durham Hearth Tax Assessment Lady Day 1666* (London, 2006), pp. xxxiii, xxxvi, xlix, xc.
[61] Geoffrey Tyack, 'The Making of the Warwickshire Country House 1500 – 1650', *Warwickshire Local History Society* Occasional Paper no. 4, July 1982, pp. 4, 33; Ann Hughes, *Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire, 1620 – 1660* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 37.

Table 1.1 Almshouse numbers 1550 - 1725				
	Durham	**Warwickshire**	**Kent**	**Total**
Surviving pre-Reformation Almshouses	5	7	17	29
Almshouses founded 1550 - 1725	14	24	56	94
Total almshouses	**19**	**31**	**73**	**123**

Source: Appendix 1

The difference in almshouse numbers only partly reflects the different population of each county. Kent not only had numerically more almshouses than either of the other two counties, but also relatively more places for its late-seventeenth century population than either Durham or Warwickshire (see Table 1.2).

Table 1.2 Almshouse places 1550 - 1725			
	Durham	Warwickshire	Kent
Total almshouse places (where known)	142	204 [62]	552 [63]
Late 17th century population[64]	52,946	82,328	c. 150,000
Places per elderly population[65]	**1:37**	**1:40** [66]	**1:27**

Source: Appendix 1

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[62] Excluding the 28 places at the Rosemary Lane almshouses built by Warwick Corporation after the Great Fire of Warwick, and 5 of the 12 places at the Lord Leycester Hospital, Warwick, as these were for men from outside Warwickshire.

[63] This total uses the latest figure where almshouse numbers changed over the period. It also excludes all the places at the Royal Naval Hospital, Greenwich, as it was a national resource, and also those places at Trinity Hospital Greenwich (8) and Quested's almshouse, Harrietsham (6) which were specifically for people from outside Kent.

[64] Population figures obtained for Durham and Warwickshire by multiplying total hearth tax households by 4.3, Tom Arkell, 'Multiplying Factors for Estimating Population Totals from the Hearth Tax', *Local Population Studies* vol. 28 (Spring 1982), p. 57; Green, Parkinson & Spufford, *Durham Hearth Tax*, pp. cxxiii; Tom Arkell & Nat Alcock (eds), *Warwickshire Hearth Tax Returns: Michaelmas 1670* (Stratford-upon-Avon & London, 2010), pp. 60-1. For Kent an approximate figure has been given from Chalkin, as Hearth Tax assessments are missing for large sections of the county, C.W. Chalkin, *Seventeenth-Century Kent* (London, 1965), p. 27.

[65] Older people are assumed to constitute 10% of the population by the end of the period, from Thane, *Old Age in English History*, p. 20.

[66] If the 28 places in the Corporation almshouses were included (see n. 62) this ratio would be 1:35.

There were also differences between the counties in the chronology, size and wealth of foundations, and these will be discussed later in the thesis. As the number of almshouses from Kent is considerably greater than the total for the other two counties together, figures from each of the counties will be shown separately whenever numerical tables are used to present information, to ensure that any distortion in the results produced by the 'Kent effect' is made explicit in the ensuing discussion. Taken together, however, the three contrasting areas convey a picture of richness and depth which, while not necessarily exemplifying the experience of the country as a whole, provides sufficient range and variety of examples to address the research questions in a reasonably representative way.

The first of the substantive chapters gives an overview of the policy background to housing the poor, tracing the development of the legislation relating to poor relief and charitable endowments, and subjecting this to a detailed analysis. It recognises the importance of housing as a component in the drive to tackle the problems associated with poverty, despite an apparent lack of policy coherence, and attempts to shed light on the intentions behind the shifts in legislation. The discussion provides the context for the next chapter, on benefactors and their motivation in pursuing this particular form of charitable endeavour. This chapter considers the diversity of founders, and the range of different impulses which led members of different groups to become involved in founding and running almshouses. It evaluates whether these went beyond the desire for personal memorialisation, or the simple meeting of social need, to include issues of particular group identity and responsibility. The fourth chapter examines the occupants of early modern

almshouses, who they were, and how they were expected to live their lives. In particular, it tests the assumption that almspeople were always the respectable, elderly, better-off poor. It examines whether there were particular expectations of the behaviour of people in almshouses, how realistic these were, and whether they differed markedly from the normal expectations of behaviour applied to other poor people in the community. The fifth chapter describes the great variety in the benefits of an almshouse place, the standard of living this might have enabled almspeople to enjoy, and how this compared with other poor people, particularly those on parish relief. In order to assess how well off almspeople were in relation to other poor people a statistical approach is adopted, constructing a minimum subsistence budget adjusted for inflation and comparing this with a range of almshouse stipends across the period. The final chapter, before the conclusion, is a return to the example with which the Introduction opened, presenting a case study of the almshouse in Leamington Hastings, Warwickshire. The intention is to examine, through this single example, the place of the almshouse in the range of resources available in the locality, how it operated in conjunction with the other elements of the local welfare economy, and whether the people who benefited from it were markedly different from other poor parishioners.

Overall, the study sets out to assess the importance accorded to almshouses in early modern England. In the post-Reformation era, what function did they serve for donors, and were there distinct motivations specific to this period. In the context of the developing statutory system of poor relief, did they have a role to play in meeting the needs of the poor, and

did this change over time. Ultimately, the study aims to judge the contribution made by early modern almshouses within the mixed economy of welfare, and whether the evidence suggests their influence and popularity had a practical significance beyond the purely symbolic.

2. Housing the poor – policy and legislation

'Christ should lie no more abroad in the streets'.[1]

Tudor and Stuart policy towards the poor was dominated by two perceived problems: vagrancy and idleness. The requirement to relieve the genuinely impotent poor was of long standing, and its continuation was never in doubt. Through the Tudor poor laws this requirement was discharged through an increasingly bureaucratic response which systematised and regulated local communities' traditional responsibilities. This imposed a nation-wide framework of parish rates assessed and dispensed by parish officials, overseen by justices of the peace. The problems of vagrancy and idleness, on the other hand, were seen as different from the traditional requirement to relieve the impotent; while not new issues in themselves, their scale and nature in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries seemed new and threatening. Occasionally there were glimmers of an understanding that these were by-products of major socio-economic changes which were transforming England: an increase in landlessness amongst the rural population; the decay of traditional industries such as the cloth trade; the loss of time-honoured relief mechanisms in the monasteries, the confraternities and the guilds; the prohibition on retained armies resulting in large numbers of discharged soldiers after each military engagement; and extensive migration to the towns, particularly London, in search of work and opportunities. Mostly, however, the problems were couched in the moral rhetoric of condemnation, of masterless men, sturdy beggars, idle

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[1] Bishop Ridley to Cecil, 1552, in R.H. Tawney & Eileen Power, *Tudor Economic Documents vol.ii* (London, 1924), p. 312.

rogues. The solutions were seen to be settlement and work, ensuring that people were the legal responsibility of one place to which they could be returned and given employment, with punishment for the recalcitrant. This is the context within which the provision of housing for the poor must be viewed.

Housing was a key element in the welfare 'system' of early modern England. Yet there was no such thing as a coherent policy encompassing approaches to housing the poor. Prior to the late eighteenth century, there was little interest in how the poor were housed, unless it was an issue of community safety or order. Only in London was anxiety expressed about the living conditions of the poor, where overcrowding, poor people 'heaped up together', was thought to encourage plague, disorder and food shortages.[2] There was neither an appreciation of the role of labourers' households in developing consumerism, nor a sense of the cottage and hearth as the site of honest domesticity and wholesome independence, both of which concepts were features of eighteenth-century commentary and reform.[3] As a result, seventeenth-century commentaries and guidance on the principles and operation of poor relief do not usually include anything on the provision of

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[2] Royal Proclamation Prohibiting New Building or Subdividing Houses, 7th July 1580. Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin (eds), *Tudor Royal Proclamations Volume II, The Later Tudors (1553 - 1587)*, (New Haven and London, 1969), p. 466; Baer, 'Housing the Poor'; Thomas G. Barnes, 'The Prerogative and Environmental Control of London Building in the Early Seventeenth Century: The Lost Opportunity', *California Law Review*, vol. 58 (1970), pp. 1332-1363.

[3] Jonathan White, 'The Laboring-Class Domestic Sphere in Eighteenth-Century British Social Thought', in John Styles and Amanda Vickery (eds), *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America 1700 – 1830* (New Haven & London, 2006), pp. 247-263; Lloyd, 'Cottage conversations'.

housing.[4] Yet housing was included in the legislation. It features in three ways: the direct provision of housing or rent for poor people through the parish poor relief system; the regulation through prohibition or licensing of cottages for the impotent poor, and of sub-tenants or inmates; and the encouragement of charitable endowment of institutions such as almshouses. The shape and form of the provision which resulted, however, was often different from that intended by the legislators, as the subsequent discussion will demonstrate. The extent and nature of the housing provision which developed was influenced by a number of factors, including the availability of charitable resources; changing views on the importance of work and how best to ensure that the poor worked for their livelihood; and also the far-reaching implications of the legislation on settlement, which underlay many responses to housing need in the parishes.

Specific mention of housing for the poor makes its first appearance in early Edwardian legislation. The 1547 Act for the Punishment of Vagabonds and for the Relief of the Poor attempted to address the issue of the many maimed, aged and impotent people resorting to London and other towns and cities to beg. Under the terms of this act's more optimistic clauses, vagrants were to be dispersed to the place of their birth or where they had lived for three years, and were there to be provided with 'cotages or other convenient howses to be lodged in, at the costes and charges of the said Cities…there to be relieved and

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[4] For instance: *An Ease for Overseers of the Poore* (1601); Michael Dalton, *The Countrey Justice* (1630); Matthew Hale, *A Discourse Touching Provision for the Poor* (1683); *The Compleat Parish Officer* (seventh edition, 1734).

cured by the devoc[i]on of the good people of the said Cities'.[5] Those not too old or lame were to be provided with work. Whether these provisions were ever effectively implemented is not known. Many towns and villages would, theoretically, have had access to accommodation at the time in the form of guild or church housing. Although the subsequent abolition of the guilds and chantries swept away much of this accommodation, there is considerable evidence of continuity, for instance in the survival of guild almshouses in towns like Maidstone, Warwick and Stratford. The problem of vagrancy remained, however, and attempts to round up beggars and return them to their home areas were largely ineffectual, so it is unlikely that this accommodation was used in any systematic way. Although the harsh penalties of this legislation were revoked two years later, the clauses relating to the disabled were retained.[6]

The 1547 Act, developing the provisions of the lapsed legislation of 1536, also ordered weekly collections of alms to be made in Church, after the priest had reminded everyone of their Christian duty to relieve the poor. This was strengthened in 1552, and again in 1563, by the appointment of collectors in every parish; the recording of the names of the poor and of those contributing, with the respective amounts; and by the threat of referral to the bishop, the justices, and ultimately imprisonment, for those refusing to contribute. This was to form the basis of the parish system of poor relief which would be codified in

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[5] An Act for the Punishment of Vagabonds and for the Relief of the Poor and Impotent Persons, I Edw. VI c. 3, (IX). Other, more notorious, clauses included branding and enslaving of those refusing to comply.
[6] Beier, *Problem of the Poor*, p. 40.

1598 and 1601 as the Old Poor Law.[7] Yet a curious diversion from this progression occurs in the lengthy 1572 Act for the Punishment of Vagabonds and for Relief of the Poor and Impotent, which assumes a continued role for the parishes but gives a specific responsibility to justices of the peace. They were to make a search within their divisions for 'all aged poore ympotent and decayed persons … which lyve or of necessitye be compelled to lyve by Almes', register them in a book and then make provision within every division of 'meete and convenient places … to settle the same poor People for their Habitacions and Abydynges', if the parish within which they were found could not or would not provide for them.[8] Any poor or impotent person found in a place where they were not born or had lived for three years, was to be returned to their home area, 'there to be put in the Abydynge Place or one of the Abydynge Places in that Countrey appointed … for the Habitacion of the poore People of that Countrey'. Further clauses refer to collectors and overseers for these 'Abydinge Places', who were to be accountable to two justices of the peace living nearby, which would seem to imply that MPs envisaged not merely that the poor would be returned to their parish of settlement but that they would be accommodated in specific buildings once they got there, if they had nowhere else to live.

This suggests that the legislators had in mind the provision of supra-parochial district residences where the impotent poor could be compelled to live, and, if able enough, to work. Anyone refusing to live there would be treated as a

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[7] An Act for the Provision and Relief of the Poor, 5 & 6 Edw. VI c. 2; An Act for the Relief of the Poor, 5 Eliz. c. 3; An Act for the Relief of the Poor, 39 Eliz. c. 3; An Act for the Relief of the Poor, 43 Eliz. c. 2.
[8] An Act for the Punishment of Vagabonds and for Relief of the Poor and Impotent, 14 Eliz. c. 5, (XVI).

vagrant; anyone capable but refusing to work would be whipped and stocked. The legislation is not clear exactly how these 'abiding places' were to be established; its clauses assumed that town corporations and country justices would agree amongst themselves where they should be and what form they should take. This vagueness resulted in a lack of clarity and uniformity in the purpose and form taken by early institutions, and is presumably the reason why 'some better Explanac[i]on' and 'nedefull Addic[i]on' to the legislation was required four years later. But it is interesting that the characteristic institution of the post-1834 new poor law unions had been anticipated as early as the sixteenth century; even more curious to imagine that, but for the deficiency of the 1572 legislation, the words '*Abiding Place'* might one day have acquired the same dread redolence as '*Workhouse*'.

But it is hard to be clear exactly what were the intentions behind these clauses. It is not always possible to trace the origins of bills which came before the Elizabethan parliaments, so the direction and priorities of official policy can be difficult to ascertain. In each session, what seems like a random selection of bills was put forward, reflecting the concerns of individual members of parliament and/or the Council. Sometimes the same bills were put forward time and again, to be rejected, amended or occasionally taken up. The legislation of 1572 had become necessary because the 1563 Act expired at the end of Elizabeth's third parliament (2nd April – 29th May 1571). The bill which the Commons had put forward to replace it in 1571 was a private bill, initially against vagabondage, but with poor relief clauses added in committee. It was rejected by the Lords, but was revived in the new parliament of the following year,

seemingly with official backing, in response to the Privy Council's increasing anxiety about the number of beggars and vagrants in London.[9] Despite the official support for this lengthy statute, the provenance and importance of its component clauses are not always clear. The main preoccupation of this parliament was the security of the realm, and the problem of how to deal with Mary Queen of Scots and the Duke of Norfolk, while the 1569 rebellion of the northern earls had increased uneasiness about aristocratic retainers and wandering bands of rebels.[10] Much of the debate seems to have been narrowly focused on who would be identified as a vagrant, particularly the inclusion or otherwise of lords' minstrels and itinerant players.[11] Frustratingly, accounts by contemporary parliamentarians throw little light on other issues which may have been included in discussion. Thomas Cromwell, MP for Bodmin, for instance merely noted in his journal for 30th May 1572: 'This day I was absent, the most parte whereof bestowed about the bill of vagabondes.'[12]

Paul Slack assumes that the 'Abiding Places' mentioned in the 1572 Act were houses of correction.[13] Sir Francis Knollys had advocated a bridewell in every town as the solution to vagrancy during the debate the previous year, to be funded by every alehousekeeper in the land contributing one shilling a

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[9] G.R. Elton, *The Parliament of England 1559 – 1581* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 269-270; Peter Roberts, 'Elizabethan players and minstrels and the legislation of 1572 against retainers and vagabonds', in Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts (eds), *Religion, culture and society in early modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 32.
[10] Paul Slack emphasizes the impact of the 1569 rebellion, prompting official searches for vagabonds and calls for legislation against them. Slack, *Poverty and Policy*, p. 124.
[11] This was of crucial importance as the act made vagrancy a felony for the first time.
[12] T.E. Hartley (ed.), *Proceedings in the Parliaments of Elizabeth I, Volume I, 1558 – 1581* (Leicester, 1981), p. 384.
[13] Slack, *Poverty and Policy,* p. 125.

year.[14] London's Bridewell Hospital, established in 1555, was already proving influential as a model for other towns and cities. Similar institutions were founded in Oxford (1562); Salisbury (1564); Norwich (by 1565); Gloucester (by 1569); and Ipswich (1569).[15] Not all of these were necessarily bridewells; some were more likely to have been hospitals or workhouses, rather than houses of correction. That of Salisbury, for instance, was originally a place to hold and set to work idle people, 'so that none should go begging'; while Blackfriars in Ipswich was established as Christ's Hospital 'for the poore people of this Towne'.[16] The Orders for the Poor drawn up at Norwich in 1571, however, make it clear that the workhouse at the Normans was a bridewell to which the mayor or his deputies could commit people as prisoners for a minimum of twenty one days if they refused to work and preferred to beg, or were vagabonds or loiterers.[17]

The language of the 1572 act, however, and the characteristics of some of these early institutions, suggests that 'Abiding Places' were originally envisaged as something different from houses of correction, with priority given to providing accommodation for poor, aged and impotent people so that they would not need to 'begge or wander about'.[18] E.M. Leonard interprets the

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[14] Ibid., p. 219.
[15] Paul Slack, 'Hospitals, workhouses and the relief of the poor in early modern London', in Ole Peter Grell & Andrew Cunningham (eds), *Health care and Poor Relief in Protestant Europe 1500 – 1700* (London, 1997), p. 237; Joanna Innes, 'Prisons for the poor: English bridewells, 1555 – 1800', in Francis Snyder and Douglas Hay (eds), *Labour, Law and Crime. An historical perspective* (London, 1987), p. 61; Austin van der Slice, 'Elizabethan Houses of Correction', *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology,* vol. 27, no. 1 (1936), pp. 45-67.
[16] Van der Slice 'Houses of Correction', p. 53.
[17] Leonard, *Poor Relief,* pp. 311-2*.*
[18] Interestingly, the 1610 foundation deed of John Southland's Hospital in New Romney, Kent, includes the terminology '*abiding place',* referring to 'two couple of poor folke that shal be placed

relevant clauses of the 1572 Act to mean that the poor were to have 'habitations' found for them, without specifying the form these were to take.[19] But it seems clear that the Act intended 'Abiding Places' to be some form of institution. Moreover, hints of coercion were already present in the legislation, with the threat of whipping or stocking for any aged or impotent person capable of working, but refusing to do so. The 'Abiding Place' was modified into a different sort of institution as the House of Correction four years later, in an act of 1576 ordering in every county 'One Two or more Abyding Howses or Places' to be provided 'and called the Howse or Howses of Correction'. These were not intended as places for the impotent poor to live, but were principally places of punishment to send the idle or beggars without settlement for a period of time, to be reformed through work.[20] For instance, Reading's 'Hospitall' was converted in 1590 into a house of correction, 'as well for the setting of the poore people to worke…as also for the punishinge and correctinge of idle and vagrant persons'.[21] The 1576 Act also included a provision to make it easier for 'well disposed persons' to found and endow Howses of Correction or Abydinge Howses, and to establish stocks of materials for setting the poor on work.[22]

It may be that what was originally intended was something along the lines of the continental *hôpital general*, but was transformed instead, in 1576, into a

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in the said Hospitall or Abiding place'. N.G. Jackson, *Southlands 1610 – 1960* (Nottingham, 1960), p. 23.

[19] Leonard, *Poor Relief,* p. 71.

[20] An Act for the setting of the Poor on Work, and for the avoiding of Idleness, 18 Eliz. c. 3, (V). One of the MPs serving on the committee which formulated this Act was John Aldrich, former Mayor of Norwich, who already had experience of the bridewell at Norwich (Innes, 'Prisons', p. 67).

[21] Van der Slice (1936), p. 57.

[22] 18 Eliz. c. 3, (IX). For the next twenty years the requirement to obtain a licence of mortmain to make such endowments was lifted.

punitive work-focused institution reflecting the priorities of the legislators. This may be a result of the disproportionate influence of London on the formulation of policy. No-one at court or parliament could be oblivious to the problems of poverty and vagrancy they saw pressing around them in London, regardless of how untypical these might be of the situation in their home areas. As a consequence, solutions appropriate to London dominated government thinking, (as was pointed out by Ralph Seckerston, MP for Liverpool).[23] London's Bridewell Hospital was one of the five royal hospitals established in the capital in the reign of Edward VI, each catering for a different category of poor person, and managed jointly by a committee of London aldermen.[24] Bridewell dealt with vagrants, and the range of needs met by the other hospitals meant that Bridewell could focus on discipline; the joint strategy and management of the hospitals, meanwhile, enabled poor people to be assessed and routed to the most appropriate placement. Other cities which attempted a co-ordinated approach, albeit on a much smaller scale, included Coventry, where a bridewell was constructed in 1580 alongside an existing boys' hospital and Bond's Hospital for the impotent poor.[25]

The importance of discipline may have been reinforced for the policy makers in London by the problems presented by the continued, limping, existence of the Savoy Hospital, an embarrassing relic from a previous age of indiscriminate charity to homeless beggars. The Savoy had been founded as an

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[23] Elton, *Parliament*, pp. 269-270.
[24] St Thomas's for the aged and impotent poor; St Bartholomew's for the sick poor; Christ's for children; Bethlehem (Bedlam) for lunatics; and Bridewell for vagrants and the idle, immoral and recalcitrant poor. Slack, 'Hospitals', p. 236.
[25] W.B. Stephens (ed.), *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 8: The City of Coventry and Borough of Warwick* (London, 1969), pp. 137-9.

act of piety by Henry VII in 1505, and richly endowed in his will of 1509. It was modelled on the reformed hospitals of fifteenth-century Italy, and was intended to provide nightly a bed and a meal for one hundred poor men. Although suppressed by Edward VI, and its lands and occupants transferred to Bridewell, it was refounded by Mary on a reduced income, and continued an independent existence alongside the five royal hospitals. The City authorities complained that the beggars who resorted there for relief were a cause of disorder, and undermined the good government of the city.[26] The Savoy was poorly managed, and its income misappropriated; by the time it was finally dissolved in 1702 it had last relieved a handful of poor people a quarter of a century before, and had been used as a military hospital in the intervening years.[27]

In contrast, the powers given to the City to sweep the streets of London for beggars and commit able-bodied rogues to Bridewell were initially considered a great success.[28] Further encouragement to private individuals to establish houses of correction came in 1598, with insufficient effect, and additional measures to make houses of correction compulsory came in 1610.[29] Every county was ordered to have at least one house of correction, properly stocked and provided, by Michaelmas 1611. In any county which failed to comply, every Justice of the Peace would suffer a fine of five pounds. By now there was no uncertainty about the nature of these institutions. Gone are any references to 'abiding places'; houses of correction were clearly places of

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[26] Leonard, *Poor Relief*, p. 63.
[27] Robert Somerville, *The Savoy, Manor: Hospital: Chapel* (London, 1960), p. 88.
[28] Innes 'Prisons', p. 55.
[29] An Acte for erecting of Hospitalles or abiding and working Howses for the Poore, 39 Eliz. c. 5; An Acte for the due execucion of divers Lawes and Statutes heretofore made against Rogues Vagabondes and Sturdye Beggars and other lewde and idle persons, 7 Jac. I c. 4.

punishment, with the master authorised to use fetters and whipping to maintain discipline. Parents deserting their children, and mothers bearing bastards, were added to the list of people who could be committed for a period of punishment through labour.

After the Acts of 1572 and 1576, however, there was a return to parish-based solutions as the legal foundation for the general system of poor relief. The great codifying acts of the end of Elizabeth's reign enshrined the parish as the unit of responsibility for assessing and collecting poor rates and paying poor relief, with justices of the peace given responsibility for oversight and arbitration. The 1598 Act for the Relief of the Poor gave the overseers and churchwardens powers to erect cottages at the charge of the parish on commons or waste for impotent poor people, with the agreement of the lord of the manor; and to place inmates or more than one family in a cottage or house.[30] The 1601 Act repeated this clause, but with the addition that such accommodation could not be used afterwards for anyone other than impotent poor of the parish placed there by the parish officials.[31] In practice, as becomes clear from the many habitation orders and licenses for cottage building given at quarter sessions, accommodation (like poor relief generally), was inevitably provided for the underemployed able-bodied poor as much as for the impotent. In this respect, the justices of the peace, like parish officials, used their powers pragmatically to extend the scope of the poor laws beyond those for whom they were legally obliged to provide. Some people for whom cottages were provided did not claim regular relief,

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[30] 39 Eliz. c. 3, (V).
[31] 43 Eliz. c. 2, (IV).

suggesting that the provision of subsidised housing for the working poor became an essential element in the poor relief system. Many parishes built or converted cottages for poor people, and, once they had done so, the 1601 amendment ensured that such properties remained in use for the poor. In this way, during the seventeenth century many parishes built up a considerable stock of ordinary housing in which to place poor people.[32]

Yet this may well have been an unintended consequence of making the parish the unit of responsibility, as institutional solutions to housing the poor seem to have been the Elizabethan legislators' preferred response.[33] After the hiatus of the Reformation years, there was a revival in the founding of almshouses for the impotent poor in Elizabeth's reign. Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester and member of the Council, was one of the people who gave a lead, by obtaining an Act of Parliament in the 1571 session to found his hospital for old soldiers at Warwick.[34] The 1572 Act exempted almshouses from the penalties for harbouring vagabonds if by the terms of their foundations they provided accommodation or alms to aged or impotent persons. Although almshouses had not been specified in the 1576 legislation which loosened the rules to encourage private benefactors to found houses of correction, it is possible that their inclusion was implied. Other leading members of the government founded almshouses in Elizabeth's reign, for instance the Secretary of State and Lord Treasurer William Cecil, Lord Burghley (at Stamford in 1597)

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[32] Broad, 'Housing', pp. 151-170.
[33] By *institutional* is meant a structured, organised form of provision with a social function and expected roles and behaviours for those living there, which distinguishes it from the merely domestic.
[34] 13 Eliz. c. 17.

and Archbishop Whitgift (at Croydon in 1596). The re-enactment in 1598 of this 1576 legislation on its expiry added hospitals and maisons dieu to the original abiding places and houses of correction, so long as their endowment did not exceed £200 a year.[35]

A further Act for the Punishment of Rogues, Vagabonds and Sturdy Beggars in 1598 suggested that a vagrant who could not be returned to their home area, because it was not known where they were born or had lived for three years, was to be whipped and placed in the house of correction or county gaol until they could be placed in service. Those 'not being able of body' were to remain in 'some Almeshowse'.[36] This assumes that almshouses were available to which vagrants unfit for work could be sent, and that the justices would have been able to access them. We are used to thinking of almshouses as places of privilege, for the respectable, deserving poor, not as holding places for disabled tramps and beggars. Yet this is the implication of this clause. Certainly in London at least the great hospitals under the control of the corporation could have fulfilled this role, if necessary, and this was possibly the case in some other cities too. The 1563 Act had given responsibility for collecting and distributing all poor relief in London to Christ's Hospital.[37] The same arrangement was ordered for Coventry through the 'Hospitall', and extended to St Bartholomew's Hospital, Gloucester, in 1572.[38]

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[35] An Acte for erecting of Hospitall[es] or abiding and working Howses for the Poore. 39 Eliz. c. 5, (I).

[36] An Acte for punishment of Rogues Vagabond[es] and Sturdy Beggars. 39 Eliz. c. 4, (III).

[37] 5 Eliz. c. 3, (XIV & XV).

[38] The Coventry 'Hospitall' is likely to have been Bond's Hospital, founded in 1506, sited next to the fourteenth-century College of Bablake, and run by the Corporation after the Reformation. After the dissolution of the college in 1548, a boys' hospital (later Bablake School) was

A further clause in the 1572 Act for the Punishment of Vagabonds and for Relief of the Poor and Impotent instructed bishops to conduct annual visitations of any hospital in their diocese which did not have a visitor appointed by the founder, suggesting that almshouses and hospitals were seen as integral to the welfare system and as part of the solution to the problems of poverty and vagrancy.[39] This is given added weight by clauses in the 1598 Act for the Relief of the Poor, providing for Justices to use the county rate to support poor prisoners and county hospitals and almshouses, and to apply any surplus county stock to the relief of poor hospitals and people suffering loss by fire, at sea or other casualties.[40] There is plenty of evidence from quarter session records of justices of the peace ensuring that county funds were used for poor prisoners and people losing all in house fires, but it is less clear that almshouses were ever supported in this way. What seems possible is that the legislators hoped for, and anticipated, the emergence of a network of almshouses throughout the land with a specific role to play within the attempt to impose order on the problems of poverty and vagrancy. But the sort of institution typically founded by private benefactors did not offer a solution in this way (with the possible exception of a few hospitals for travellers, discussed in chapter 3). Eligibility for endowed almshouses was often prescriptive, and access to places was controlled by patrons and trustees. For instance, Leicester's hospital in Warwick for twelve poor men was for former soldiers or retainers from a number

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established in 1560 in one part of the building, and a decision was made in 1571 to use another part for a house of correction or bridewell. This was constructed in 1580. Stephens, *Warwick Vol. VIII,* pp. 137-9.

[39] 14 Eliz. c. 5, (XXXII).

[40] 39 Eliz. c. 3, (XIII and XIV).

of places with specific connections with his family, of which Warwick was but one; and its patron, Dudley himself, rather than the local justices or town officials, controlled admissions.

Neither is there evidence, despite the encouragement of the legislation, of any enthusiasm from private benefactors for founding punitive institutions such as bridewells, where the connection with the lawlessness and immorality of their unsavoury occupants would have constituted a far less attractive site of memorialisation than an orderly almshouse of respectable pensioners. Despite its early success, the London Bridewell was a continual cause of concern, with allegations of mismanagement and corruption, and it was soon branded a 'rogues' hospital'.[41] Jordan acknowledged the failure of bridewells, workhouses and work schemes, unlike schools and almshouses, to attract charitable funds, calculating that over the whole of his period they accounted for less than one per cent of all charitable wealth.[42] Some of the charitable funds applied to these purposes in the seventeenth century were actually redirected by executors and trustees, rather than bequeathed by benefactors. For instance, the Nantwich workhouse, established with a charitable bequest, was converted into a bridewell in the 1660s at the request of the townspeople; and Devon magistrates redirected a sum of money which had been left for setting the poor on work into constructing a penal 'County Workhouse'.[43] As a result, most work or correctional schemes, of which there were many examples in the seventeenth century, were founded at the public charge. With the exception of

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[41] Innes 'Prisons', pp. 55-6.
[42] Jordan, *Philanthropy*, p. 271.
[43] Innes 'Prisons', p. 78.

bridewells, most of these were short-lived.[44] Jordan puts this failure down to badly run schemes failing to cover their costs, or better run schemes undercutting local businesses. He described their efforts as an 'appealing but wholly impractical form of social rehabilitation'.[45]

Private benefactors who intended to endow a house of correction were assisted by the 1576 legislation which removed the requirement to obtain a licence of mortmain from the crown. Despite this encouragement, the government expressed disappointment that the 1576 Act 'hath not taken such effecte as was intended'.[46] A new act in 1598 simplified the legal process for endowing and incorporating almshouses, workhouses and houses of correction, an interesting amalgam which seems to differentiate little between institutions we would expect to have featured different regimes and objectives. The 1598 Act for Erecting of Hospitals has been credited with producing a remarkable surge in almshouse foundations in the early decades of the seventeenth century, and indeed, after the Act, many members of the government led by example in founding or supporting institutions, for instance George Abbot, Archbishop of Canterbury, (Abbot's Hospital in Croydon,1619), and Thomas Trevor, Baron of the Exchequer (Leamington Hastings, 1633).[47] It is clear, however, that a great many more foundations, including those of Leicester, Whitgift and Burghley, predate the change. Rather than being the *result* of the legislation, many early modern foundations were part of the same movement which *produced* the legislation: both were a response to the debate about the

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[44] Slack, *Poverty and Policy*, pp. 152-3.
[45] Jordan, *Philanthropy*, pp. 270-272.
[46] Preamble to the extending legislation of 1598, 39 Eliz. c. 5.
[47] Prescott, *English Medieval Hospital*, p. 73.

growing problem of poverty and how to deal with it, a debate which also gave rise to the poor law legislation. This is supported by the suggestion (in chapter 3) that the 1570s was a key decade for almshouse foundation, a decade which also produced the 1572 and 1576 legislation discussed above.

For those benefactors considering founding a permanent institution, as exhorted by Elizabeth and her ministers, the capital costs could be considerable. The house of correction at Winchester, for instance, cost £1,000 to build in 1578.[48] Jordan calculated that a modest almshouse could be founded at a cost of between £100 and £500, while a larger one would require £500 - £1,000.[49] It cost William Lambarde, however, a total of £2,739 to build and endow his almshouse for twenty people at East Greenwich in 1576.[50] Private charity was unsurprisingly considered an essential contributor to projects of this sort. Jordan, whose insights were often sound even if his statistics were not, argued that charitable giving was initially expected at this time to be the principal means by which the poor were to be relieved, with parish rates only intended to fill the gaps.[51] Many founders of almshouses were childless and endowed foundations out of their estates after death; otherwise the cost to them and their families might have been prohibitive. A benefactor like Robert Dudley, who founded his almshouse during his lifetime, was fortunate to acquire the building from Warwick corporation at no cost to himself. Initially he had to support the foundation out of his income; upon his death the grant of lands he made to the

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[48] Van der Slice 'Houses of Correction', p. 62.
[49] Jordan, *Philanthropy*, pp. 340-1.
[50] Retha M. Warnicke, *William Lambarde, Elizabethan Antiquary* (London & Chichester, 1973), p. 44.
[51] Jordan, *Philanthropy*, pp. 107-8.

hospital in his will was challenged, unsuccessfully, by his widow.[52] Nor did the parsimonious Elizabeth give a lead in charitable giving, unlike her father and brother before her. Yet in 1598 and 1601, the enactment of the Statutes of Charitable Uses, which created a legal framework for the protection of the assets and intentions of benefactors, confirms how crucially important the government saw the contribution of private charity to be.[53] The legislation provided for commissioners to investigate breaches of charitable trusts and make decrees to remedy these. It was immediately successful, with many thorough-going investigations into the administration of charitable trusts in the early decades of the seventeenth century.[54]

The final element in the legislation regarding poor people's housing was the regulation of where and with whom the poor should live. During the parliamentary debate on the 1572 Act, Nicholas St John, a Wiltshire landowner and Member for the town of Marlborough, had interjected that one of the reasons for the increase in rogues was their practice of building squatters' cottages on commons with no land attached (and therefore little opportunity for gaining an honest livelihood). He proposed that no cottage should be built without three or four acres of ground attached, and a bill to this effect was put forward two days later, but got no further than a second reading.[55] The idea,

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[52] E.G. Tibbits, 'The Hospital of Robert, Earl of Leicester, in Warwick', *Birmingham Archaeological Society Transactions and Proceedings,* vol. LX (1936), pp. 118-120; 129-132.
[53] An Acte to reforme Deceiptes and Breaches of Trust, towching Landes given to charitable Uses, 39 Eliz. c. 6; An Acte to redresse the Misemployment of Landes Goodes and Stockes of Money heretofore given to Charitable Uses, 43 Eliz. c. 4.
[54] Gareth Jones, *History of the Law of Charity 1532 – 1827* (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 23-5; McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England*, p. 288.
[55] J.E. Neale, *The Elizabethan House of Commons* (London, 1949) p. 156; Hartley, *Proceedings*, pp. 367, 372; Elton, *Parliament*, p. 270.

however, was not forgotten, and legislation was enacted in 1589.[56] This set out penalties of £10 for building or converting a cottage in the countryside without at least four acres of land, forty shillings a month for allowing such an illegal building to remain, and ten shillings a month for owners or occupiers of cottages who allowed inmates or more than one family to share a cottage. This was another example of Tudor legislators mistaking cause for effect, and attempting to put the clock back to a less populous rural past where no-one was idle and every able bodied person was able to be self-supporting.

Excluded from the Act were houses in towns, or adjacent to mines, quarries, coasts and rivers, and also any cottage inhabited by 'a poore lame sicke aged or ympotent p[er]son', which in effect meant that the restrictions could not be applied to parish housing or almshouses. This legislation, which was not repealed until 1775, had the potential, in the rural areas in particular, seriously to undermine poor people's attempts to house themselves, and provided ample scope for conflict and contradiction in neighbourhoods. Many landowners were happy to allow squatters to construct cottages on their land as it increased their rents, while others were active in pulling down cottages to prevent them being occupied by poor tenants.[57] Parishioners were concerned about the arrival of poor people likely to become a burden on the poor rates, but occasional trawls by constables could result in people being presented before

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[56] An Acte againste erectinge and mayntayninge of Cottages. 31 Eliz. c. 7.
[57] Broad, 'Housing', p. 151; Danae Tankard, 'The regulation of cottage building in seventeenth-century Sussex', *Agricultural History Review,* vol. 59 (June 2011), pp. 24, 31.

the magistrates who had lived undisturbed for years, including sometimes parish pensioners.[58]

Parishioners' responsibility for relieving their own poor made policing the boundaries of that responsibility imperative, and the rules of settlement, codified in law in 1662 but evolving in practice long before that, provided the framework by which people could be excluded or permitted to remain.[59] Inmates, people (including kin) lodging in others' houses, were seen as particularly evil, not having a defined relationship in society as householders, apprentices or servants, but perceived as masterless, rootless vagrants. They were accused of sneaking and lurking to obtain an undeserved foothold in the community, consuming rather than contributing to the resources of the genuine, indigenous poor. This attitude even extended to families attempting to help one another out by taking in relatives, who were ordered to evict adult children or siblings if they were suspected of having a claim on settlement elsewhere. But parishes frequently housed people as inmates when it suited them; some parishes' standard approach to poor relief was to board out poor people on their better off neighbours.[60] Parish housing provided for the poor was often multi-occupied, and rarely had land attached. The potential existed for endless conflict, with overseers of the poor trying to find pragmatic solutions to homelessness, and constables presenting inmates and illegal cottagers; poor people trying to find employment and somewhere to live, and parishes trying to keep them out.

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[58] Hindle, *On the Parish?*, p. 303, 314-9.
[59] An Act for the Better Relief of the Poor of this Kingdom, 14 Car.II c. 12; Philip Styles, 'The evolution of the law of settlement', reprinted in Philip Styles, *Studies in Seventeenth-Century West Midlands History* (Kineton, 1978), pp. 175-204.
[60] Hindle, *On the Parish?* pp. 63-6; Marshall, *English Poor,* p. 111.

Quarter sessions records demonstrate the extent to which the arbitration of settlement disputes became a significant component of magistrates' workload. Once settlement had been determined and the person returned to their parish of settlement, they might then need to be housed by the parish, increasing the pressure on parish resources. In practice, the poor were at the mercy both of their neighbours and of the justices. The prohibition and licensing of cottages, and the operation of the settlement laws, brought ordinary people into the reach of the developing welfare bureaucracy, even if they were not recipients of poor relief. In this respect, commentators such as Dalton were right that poor laws undermined independence – poor people's attempts to find their own solutions were continually sabotaged by their better off neighbours.

In this climate almshouses were not immune from similar concerns. Most almshouses only catered for the poor of their immediate locality, and entry criteria often specified a minimum length of time an applicant had to be resident in that locality to qualify.[61] Where some of the wealthier almshouses such as Robert Dudley's Lord Leycester Hospital took some of their residents from outside the immediate locality, stipends were sufficiently generous to place the almspeople outside the concern of the poor law authorities. At other places, such as New Cobham College, which admitted recipients of poor relief from a number of surrounding parishes, the parish of origin had to provide the almshouse with a bond of £20 'to save the parish of Cobham harmless', guaranteeing not only that the poor person met the criteria for admission but

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[61] For instance, applicants to New Cobham College, Kent, had to have resided in their parish for a minimum of 3 years; for Hutchinson's almshouse at Romaldkirk it was 7 years. MALSC VF COB 726.709; DRO EP/Rom 12/2.

that the parish of origin retained responsibility for them.[62] Almshouse rules often specifically prohibited the lodging of inmates (see chapter 4), for fear the attraction of free accommodation could lead to them becoming a haven for the ineligible if needy poor from outside the area. In Elizabethan Warwick, for example, where Lee Beier used the 1587 census to calculate that 45% of the poor were either inmates themselves or lived in households with inmates, these included the beggar Margery Watts and her two children lodging illegally in the Westgate almshouses. They were ordered to be evicted and returned to their home parish of Bishops Itchington.[63]

The settlement merry-go-round to which many poor people were subjected, although it ostensibly protected the interests of parish ratepayers, probably contributed in the longer term to the well-documented, steady increase in sums paid out in poor relief throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[64] The problem was still conceived as one of idleness; the solutions, yet again, were seen to be work and discipline. Attitudes to the poor hardened, with the introduction of compulsory badges to be worn by those on poor relief in 1697, and the denial of relief to anyone refusing.[65] Despite earlier failures, there was a revived interest in work schemes towards the end of the seventeenth century. London's experiment with a Corporation of the Poor in the commonwealth years was adopted, first by Bristol in 1696, then by another

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[62] MALSC P336/5/1 Shorne Churchwardens' accounts 1630 – 1681, rules relating to Cobham College.
[63] Beier, 'Social problems', p. 61; Thomas Kemp (ed.), *The Book of John Fisher, Town Clerk and Deputy Recorder of Warwick (1580 – 1588),* (Warwick, 1900), pp. 170-1.
[64] Slack, *Poverty and Policy*, p. 179; Hindle, *On the Parish?* pp. 275-6.
[65] An Act for supplying some Defects in the Laws for the Relief of the Poor, 8 & 9 William III c. 30.

thirteen provincial towns by 1712.[66] These schemes enabled work and relief to be organised in larger units across parish boundaries.

In 1723, Knatchbull's Act, or the Workhouse Test Act, encouraged parishes to set up workhouses, or to join with other parishes in doing so, but, more importantly, gave the overseers the right to withdraw relief from anyone refusing to enter the workhouse.[67] Workhouses were not a new phenomenon; many towns and villages had experimented with them in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But the degree of compulsion or incarceration involved in many early work schemes is hard to establish, and certainly not all were intended to be residential. For instance, the Frampton parish workhouse in Lincolnshire may perhaps be better described as a workshop in its first incarnation in the 1630s and 40s, and there is no evidence that it housed paupers before the eighteenth century.[68] The short-lived workhouse established in 1633 in the former church house in Fillongley, Warwickshire, was intended to house any of the poor who had nowhere else to live, but there is no suggestion that people would be compelled to live there.[69] The 1723 Act, however, enshrined the principle that housing the poor was now to be in a punitive environment: the aim was deliberately to put people off applying for relief, rather than to meet the accommodation needs of those with nowhere else to go.

Yet, as Broad has shown, even after 1723, parish paupers continued to be housed in ordinary housing in the community. He argues that this was

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[66] Slack, *Reformation,* p. 103.
[67] An Act for Amending the Laws relating to Settlement, Employment and Relief of the Poor, 9 Geo. I c. 7.
[68] Hindle, *On the Parish?* p. 184.
[69] S.C. Ratcliff & H.C. Johnson (eds), *Warwick County Records Volume I: Quarter Sessions Order Book* (WQS hereafter), *Easter, 1625 to Trinity, 1637* (Warwick, 1935) p. 223.

because ordinary people retained a belief that even the poor were entitled to a home of their own. This may be an overly romantic notion: many parish paupers were forced to share accommodation, and the Webbs believed that parish housing always tended to revert to the 'general mixed workhouse' type, where were housed together an unsavoury mix of the derelict, the aged, the immoral and the innocent.[70] But the actions of many justices of the peace, themselves a landowning class, in licensing cottages, making habitation orders and intervening in parish affairs when the actions of the overseers were deemed negligent or unjust, also shaped the nature and scale of parish provision. This suggests that contested ideologies were at play, with the theoretical desire for order and discipline counterbalanced by philanthropy, liberalism and pragmatic economics.

The overarching theme of welfare policy on housing seems to be that the preferred option of the political elite, as reflected in the legislation, tended towards institutional solutions, but that implementation produced very different results.[71] Policy makers, in England as much as in continental Europe, wanted provision for the poor which was ordered and institutional, although not necessarily (at least at first) penal or punitive. Yet in only a few places, such as London, did they succeed. Slack discusses a number of reasons why the system of English poor relief did not develop along the lines of continental institutions.[72] Only in London were there large-scale welfare institutions equivalent to those found in continental cities, although early attempts to

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[70] Webb and Webb, *Poor Law History,* pp. 213, 218.
[71] See earlier, note 32.
[72] Slack, *Poverty and Policy*, pp. 8-14.

replicate the London system of co-ordinated relief were conducted in, for instance, Coventry. The emphasis on the parish as the unit of responsibility in England, confirmed in the codified poor laws of 1598 and 1601, ensured that provision, including accommodation for the poor, necessarily remained small scale and local, and hindered the development of the large welfare institutions which were typical of many continental cities. Even in London, where the responsibility for the collection of poor rates through Christ's Hospital was enshrined in law, tensions existed with the parishes, and by 1598 this attempt at central control was abandoned.[73] Meanwhile, private charitable provision was similarly fragmented and small scale. Despite government encouragement, very few individual benefactors had sufficient wealth or inclination to found large scale institutions. The abolition of the guilds and fraternities meant that, apart from the London livery companies, there was no real framework for collective charitable provision until the development of subscription charities in the eighteenth centuries.

Had the justices and burgesses retained the powers and responsibilities implied in the 1572 Act and developed the means of collecting and spending resources on larger scale provision, such as the 'abiding places' mentioned in the Act, the outcome might have been different. But the confirmation of the parish as the unit of responsibility in 1598 meant that, for most of the period, there was no co-ordinated provision of either public or private institutions across the towns and counties of England in the way the legislators may have hoped: most housing provided for the poor in the early modern period was neither

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[73] Slack, 'Hospitals', p. 238.

institutional nor punitive, but consisted of small scale almshouses and ordinary cottages, until harsher attitudes made workhouses commonplace from the eighteenth century.

3. Benefactors and their motivations

'To classify men's charitable acts into neat categories according to the impulses assumed to have prompted them would be dangerous and absurd. Human behaviour rarely exhibits such helpful singleness of motive'.[74]

The motivation behind any philanthropic gesture is open to a number of interpretations, and altruism and self-interest may, as Clive Burgess observes, be 'hopelessly entangled'.[75] As a particular form of philanthropy with a long history, almshouses lent themselves to a wide range of motivations which went beyond the obvious meeting of social need. Founders, too, were a diverse group, ranging from town tradesmen, country gentry and local clergymen to city merchants, great magnates and church prelates. Many were involved in local or state government and administration, and their philanthropy was as much a public as a private gesture, influenced by a range of complex and overlapping agenda. While the Christian imperative to provide for the poor was accepted by Catholics and Protestants alike, and for many founders this was probably sufficient motivation, for others there is some suggestion that the founding and administration of almshouses might have played a part in forging particular religious and cultural identities. In the continuing debate on the correct response to the problem of the poor, moreover, members of the government and court publicly led by example in founding almshouses and in other charitable works.

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[74] David Owen, *English Philanthropy 1660 – 1960* (Oxford, 1965), p. 36.
[75] Clive Burgess, '"A fond thing vainly invented": an essay on Purgatory and pious motive in later medieval England', in Susan Wright (ed.), *Parish, Church and People. Local studies in lay religion 1350 – 1750* (London, 1988), p. 67.

For the landowning classes, accepting responsibility for providing for aged tenants and other poor people in the neighbourhood was an obvious expression of their status, virtue and moral leadership, while their charitable foundations could themselves become sites of memorialisation. Amongst the urban oligarchies, involvement in the provision of almshouses was likewise an opportunity to demonstrate or acquire prestige and respect through the exercise of civic responsibility. Consequently, the beneficiaries of almshouses might be not only the poor inhabitants themselves, but the donors, the administrators, and society more generally.

In these circumstances, identifying the specific impulses which motivated individual donors is a necessarily speculative exercise. The conservatism of many donors, whereby benefactors were influenced by the philanthropic acts of their contemporaries or local predecessors, also makes it difficult to judge how far individuals were subject to a precise set of motivations. Yet the surge in almshouse foundations in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and their enduring popularity in the early modern period, requires at least some attempt at explanation. There were two crucial mid-sixteenth century changes which might have been expected to obviate the need for, or reduce the attraction of, almshouse foundation for potential donors. The first was the abolition of intercessory institutions, which was the function of many medieval hospitals; and the second was the development of statutory poor relief, which included parish responsibility for housing their poor. Neither of these changes, however, appears to have had any such impact. On the contrary, from the second half of the sixteenth century almshouses continued to be founded in

great numbers. This chapter will explore some of the possible motivations influencing the founders and benefactors of almshouses in the early modern period, and the societal and cultural pressures to which they were responding, in an attempt to understand why almshouses were attractive to benefactors. Their objectives, specifically what they hoped to achieve through this particular form of philanthropy, will be examined in succeeding chapters discussing the identity of the beneficiaries and the nature of what was provided for them (chapters 4 & 5).

Who were the donors?

Founding an endowed almshouse required a major investment, and this act must have held considerable significance for benefactors. Even an unendowed almshouse, perhaps the donor's own house or a couple of cottages, represented an important gift of property and assumes the donor to have been in possession of disposable wealth; wealth, moreover, surplus to that which was required for supporting a family or heirs. In her study of Warwickshire landed society in the fifteenth century, Christine Carpenter claims that merchants, new gentry and rising yeomen farmers were able to spend more on roads, bridges, education and the poor, not from ideological motives but because they had more of their wealth in surplus goods rather than land. It was the priority of established landowners, on the other hand, to preserve the integrity of their estates for future generations, so their charitable bequests were often of 'peripheral or specially acquired properties' that were not fundamental to the

estate they were trying to preserve.[76] Surplus, disposable, wealth was consequently a prerequisite for founding an almshouse. For childless founders there were fewer competing claims for their available wealth, and founding an almshouse could be one way of benefiting posterity in the absence of heirs. Thomas Oken, Warwick mercer, died childless in 1573 and left the bulk of his fortune for the benefit of the town, including an almshouse of three cottages for six poor people. Similarly, Nicholas Chamberlaine, another Warwickshire almshouse founder, declared in his will of 1715, 'I having no child do dispose of my temporall Estate to the charitable uses following'.[77] Anne Langley has calculated that, of the twenty-one individual founders of almshouses in Warwickshire before 1900 that she identified, just over half were childless.[78]

Unsurprisingly, most founders were men, though this probably under-represents women's influence. In Warwickshire, for instance, of the twenty-seven almshouses definitely known to have been founded between 1500 and 1725, only one was founded by a woman alone; the figures for Durham are one out of thirteen, and for Kent one out of fifty-four.[79] Women were sometimes involved, either as founders themselves or acting jointly with their husbands, or as executors of their husband's estates. Dame Alice Leigh, for instance, who built the Stoneleigh almshouses in Warwickshire in 1574 three years after the death of her husband Sir Thomas, said that she was acting on her husband's

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[76] Christine Carpenter, *Locality and Polity. A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society, 1401 – 1499* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 224-5, 238, 241.
[77] TNA PROB 11/548/170 Will of Nicholas Chamberlaine, Clerk of Bedworth Warwickshire, 24 June 1715.
[78] Anne Langley, 'Warwickshire Almshouses, 1400 to 1900: "Affording comfortable asylums to the aged and respectable poor"', *Warwickshire History*, vol. XIV, no. 4 (Winter 2009/10), p. 141.
[79] See Appendix 1.

wishes, and the almshouses were credited to the couple in the founding letters patent.[80] John and Ann Smith, wealthy Londoners, founded their almshouse at Longport in Canterbury together in 1644, apparently in thanks for the birth of a son after twenty years of marriage.[81] Acting as his executrix, Nicholas Eyffler's wife arranged with Robert West for the conversion of the barn her husband had bought from West to be converted into an almshouse for eight women.[82] The administration of trusts, and of almshouses under the control of parishes and town corporations, was almost universally at this period undertaken by men alone, and there were no boards of female governors or regents to compare with those in seventeenth-century Holland, for instance.[83]

In his works on English philanthropy between 1480 and 1660 W.K. Jordan claimed that, whereas medieval charity had been largely provided by the church and the nobility, in the period he studied these were largely replaced by the gentry and the people he described as the mercantile aristocracy.[84] He used fourteen different groups to categorise donors of testamentary bequests in ten English counties, and tabulated the amount and percentage of their contribution to different causes to demonstrate the dominance of the gentry and, particularly, the merchant classes. He showed for instance that tradesmen donated more in total to charity than the nobility (an entirely spurious comparison when one

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[80] House of Commons Parliamentary Papers (HCPP), Reports of the Commissioners appointed to Inquire concerning Charities in England and Wales, no. 18 (1828), p. 521.
[81] Derek Ingram Hill, *The Ancient Hospitals and Almshouses of Canterbury* (Canterbury, 2004), p. 45.
[82] WRO CR1618/WA12/34 and CR1618/WA12/36/13.
[83] See, for instance, the many 17th century group portraits of regentesses of Haarlem hospitals in the Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem. http://www.franshalsmuseum.nl/en/collection/search-collection/?q=regentesses&medium=&category=&artist= (accessed 5 December 2013).
[84] Jordan, *Philanthropy,* pp. 18-9.

considers the great disparity of the numbers in each group).[85] Despite Jordan's assertions, almshouse foundations by churchmen and nobility were still in evidence in the early modern period. While the absence of foundations by the monarch for almost two hundred years is perhaps remarkable, the crown's financial difficulties for most of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is the likely explanation.[86] Noble founders were certainly few in number; examples include the Earl of Leicester (Warwick, 1571), the Countesses of Cumberland and Pembroke (Beamsley Hospital in North Yorkshire, 1593 and 1650), and the Earl of Northampton (Clun 1607, Castle Rising 1609 and Greenwich 1614). Almshouses continued to be founded throughout the early modern period by great churchmen, however, and also, particularly after the Restoration, by lesser clergy. For instance, Archbishops of Canterbury Whitgift (1596) and Abbot (1617), Archbishops of York Robert Holgate (1555) and Matthew Hutton (1594), and Bishop of Durham John Cosin (1662 and 1666) all founded almshouses; as did the clergymen Abraham Colfe (Lewisham, 1658); George Davenport (Houghton-le-Spring, Durham, 1666); Nicholas Chamberlaine (Bedworth, Warwickshire,1715); John Bowes (Bishopwearmouth, Durham, 1725); and Oliver North (West Farleigh, Kent, 1725).[87]

Obviously, the assets required to found an endowed almshouse means that one would expect almshouse founders to come from the wealthier groups:

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[85] These groups included the crown, nobility, upper and lower gentry, upper and lower clergy, yeomen, husbandmen and agricultural labourers, merchants, tradesmen, burghers, artisans and lastly the professions and public officials. *Ibid.,* Tables X and XI, Structure of Class Aspirations, pp. 384-7.
[86] There were no foundations by the reigning monarch between the Savoy Hospital, founded by Henry VII in 1505, and the Royal Hospital at Chelsea founded by Charles II in 1682.
[87] See Appendix 1.

merchants rather than tradesmen, gentry rather than husbandmen.[88] Yet despite the assurance with which Jordan uses his categories, the exact occupation and status of many almshouse founders is unknown, and for others the categories are blurred. For instance, nothing is known of George Ingram, who founded the Bleachfield almshouses in Alcester, Warwickshire, in 1680, beyond the fact that his family were local mercers and that he was probably brother-in-law to John Bridges, founder of the Priory almshouses in the same town in 1659.[89] Bridges was a 'minor lawyer' who served as a Colonel in the Parliamentary forces and as governor of Warwick castle. The Bridges family owned land in Alcester and served as stewards to Lord Brooke.[90] It is not clear in which of Jordan's categories he would have placed either man. Just as elusive are two other Warwickshire almshouse founders: Thomas Newcomb, founder of almshouses at Dunchurch in 1690, about whom the only known fact appears to be that he was printer to King Charles II; and Humphrey Davis, founder of the almshouse at Leamington Hastings in 1607. Davis was an ordained clergyman and schoolmaster, but does not appear to have been occupied in either capacity in Warwickshire, and how he came by his wealth is a mystery.[91] He left his own house to be lived in by eight poor, and charged his brother's family with their support from the lands he left them.

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[88] Jordan's interest was endowed charity, demonstrated through testamentary bequests. As such, he ignored many smaller gifts, including houses and cottages, with which a wider section of the population had traditionally benefited their local communities. See the critique of Jordan by Steve Hindle in *On the Parish?* pp. 98-9.

[89] G.E. Saville, 'Bleachfield and Swan Streets and Stratford Road', *Alcester and District Local History Society*, Occasional Paper no. 35 (1985) p. 4; John Bridges' son Brooke Bridges refers to Ingram as 'my uncle' in his will. WRO CR2219/13 Codicil to Brooke Bridges' will 1702.

[90] Hughes, *Politics,* p. 235.

[91] See Leamington Hastings case study, Chapter 6.

This was a typical gesture of many less wealthy donors, particularly if they were childless. Quite ordinary people had for generations left houses and cottages for the use of the poor, either to be rented out and the income used for the good of the church or the poor, or to be used as a base for communal activities such as church ales. Often, however, they were also used to provide accommodation for poor people of the parish at little or no rent. [92] The property might be left to the parish church to be managed by the churchwardens, rather than to relatives as in Davis's case, or to town corporations or guilds. For example, Peregrine Horden notes from the 1517-8 churchwardens' accounts of St Mary's Lambeth that the parish was running an almshouse.[93] Miri Rubin cites the similar example of St Mary's parish in Cambridge, where Thomas Jakenett and Thomas Ebbon established almshouses near the church in 1479. These were maintained by the churchwardens and appear in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century churchwarden accounts, where the almsfolk are occasionally mentioned as cleaning the church.[94] Pat Cullum describes the ubiquitous but often ephemeral *maisons dieu* of late-medieval Yorkshire where provision could be as basic as a room in the donor's house reserved for the poor.[95] The extensive property of the Guild of Corpus Christi in Maidstone, Kent, taken over by the town corporation in 1549, included very many small cottages used as almshouses, which had probably been gifted by members in the past.[96]

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[92] Cowley, *Church Houses,* pp. 63, 82.
[93] Horden, 'Small Beer?', p. 346.
[94] Miri Rubin, *Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 128.
[95] Cullum, 'Pore People', p. 38.
[96] Peter Clark & Lynn Murfin, *The History of Maidstone. The Making of a Modern County Town* (Stroud, 1995), p. 56.

This tradition of housing the poor was probably more widespread than surviving documentation suggests, as indicated by the occasional references to vestiges of early provision about which very little else is known. For instance, there was a medieval hospital in Henley-in-Arden, Warwickshire, for the poor and wayfarers which was rebuilt in 1449, but apart from that nothing is known of it.[97] Yet the reference in the hearth tax returns of 1670 to 'Foure almes houses' in Henley-in-Arden could suggest some form of provision survived from this medieval hospital.[98] Similarly, the reference in the 1587 will of William Willoughby to the almshouses in Nuneaton churchyard suggests they were an earlier foundation, possibly supported by the church or a guild.[99] Historians such as Horden and Marjorie McIntosh have demonstrated that the development of statutory poor relief in Tudor England came on the back of an already well-embedded tradition of formal and informal giving within parishes, which included the provision of housing. As with much of the Tudor poor relief legislation, the provisions for cottages for the impotent poor seems to have acknowledged this tradition, rather than initiated it.[100]

Almshouses as a response to social need

The remarkable surge in the founding of almshouses in the early modern period has usually been viewed as a direct response to problems of poverty and homelessness. Elizabeth Prescott asserts that 'in the mid sixteenth century there was a desperate need for accommodation of this kind', exacerbated by the

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[97] W. Page (ed.), *A History of the County of Warwick* (Victoria County History) vol. 2 (London, 1909), p. 112.
[98] Arkell & Alcock (eds), *Warwickshire Hearth Tax Returns,* p. 235.
[99] HCPP no. 29 (1835), p. 993.
[100] McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England,* p. 111.

loss of monasteries and hospitals through the dissolution.[101]   The impact of these losses is hard to quantify, and may have been exaggerated by contemporary commentators. Both Clay and Prescott use a single quotation about the impotent poor from the 1546 polemic, *A Supplication of the Poor Commons*: 'The[n] had they hospitals, and almshouses to be lodged in, but nowe they lye and storve in the stretes. Then was their number great, but nowe much greater'.[102] This may well be a nostalgic reference to an imagined golden age when the poor were properly looked after, rather than an accurate portrayal of the past; and, given the forty-three pages of vivid anti-clerical complaints within which it is embedded, this single quotation has possibly been ascribed too much significance. More recent scholarship, however, has revised upwards the proportion of monastic income estimated to have been spent on the poor, although this was unlikely to have been evenly distributed throughout the country.[103]

In a town such as Warwick which was not well endowed with functioning medieval hospitals, the dissolution itself probably had little impact. The leper hospital of St Michael's had been absorbed by St Sepulchre's Priory in the fifteenth century, and there was no master at the time of the dissolution, but a few pensioners continued to be supported by St Mary's parish and the new owners of the Priory in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The other Warwick hospital, St John the Baptist's, catered principally for travellers, and

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[101] Prescott, *English Medieval Hospital*, p. 72.
[102] *A Supplication of the Poor Commons* (1546), p. 291.
[103] Neil S. Rushton, 'Monastic charitable provision in Tudor England: quantifying and qualifying poor relief in the early sixteenth century', *Continuity and Change,* vol. 16, no. 1 (May 2001), pp. 9-44.

appears to have had no residents by the time of the dissolution.[104] In contrast, the city of Coventry lost twenty beds for the poor upon the dissolution of their St John's Hospital in 1545.[105] It is not clear, however, whether all lost hospital places were still fulfilling a useful function by the time of the dissolution. For instance, Clay gives many examples of institutions like St John's, Warwick, which had decayed to the point where there were no longer any inmates, or where the poor had been replaced by permanent corrodians (better off people who had paid for their place) by the time of the dissolution.[106]

Orme and Webster assert that after the dissolution 'a very large body' of working hospitals and almshouses survived intact into the post-Reformation era, but Marjorie McIntosh is the first historian who has made an attempt to assess the actual number which survived the Reformation.[107] By her calculations, over half of the 600 institutions existing on the eve of the Reformation survived the dissolution of monasteries, guilds and chantries in the mid-sixteenth century. The king's commissioners and the Court of Augmentations made a theoretical distinction between revenues used for superstitious and charitable uses, confiscating the former but in many cases re-assigning revenues to the latter.[108] The many ancient foundations which had been monastic in origin were swept away; such was the fate of St Giles' Hospital for the poor at Kepier, Durham,

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[104] Page, *County of Warwick,* pp. 115-7. The Henrician survey of chantries found that neither of the two hospitals in Warwick was 'used nor the possessions thereof employed according to the intent of their foundations', Alan Kreider, *English Chantries: the road to dissolution* (Cambridge, Mass. & London, 1979), p. 65.

[105] Prescott, *English Medieval Hospital*, p. 168.

[106] Clay, *Medieval Hospitals,* p. 225.

[107] Orme & Webster, *English Hospital,* p. 161; McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England,* CUP Online Appendix 2: Number of institutions founded, closed, and in existence per decade.

[108] Kreider, *English Chantries*, pp. 175-6.

founded in 1112 and dissolved in 1545.[109] Yet a remarkable two thirds of pre-Reformation hospitals and almshouses either survived or were re-founded, often as a result of the intervention of powerful advocates, or petitions from town and city corporations who valued their local institutions and were allowed to acquire the dissolved foundations and their lands from the crown.[110] Archbishop Parker, for instance, intervened to save St Thomas's Hospital in Canterbury, founded to accommodate pilgrims coming to the shrine of St Thomas a Becket. He re-founded it as Eastbridge Hospital for wounded and travelling soldiers, and supported it out of his own resources. After his death in 1575, attempts were again made to seize its revenues. This time Archbishop Whitgift rescued it, and re-founded it as an almshouse for the poor of Canterbury, with ten in-brothers and sisters, and ten out-brothers and sisters.[111] Two other Canterbury hospitals also survived: St John's Hospital in the city, and St Nicholas Harbledown, just outside the city and originally for lepers, managed jointly with St John's. Yet in the whole of County Durham only five medieval hospitals survived, and two of these struggled against attempts at expropriation throughout Elizabeth's reign. Christ's Hospital at Sherburn, just outside Durham, and the Hospital of God at Greatham seem to have enjoyed the protection of the Bishops of Durham, yet the bishop's own hospital at Northallerton did not survive and the wealthiest

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[109] Margaret Harvey, *Lay Religious Life in Late Medieval Durham* (Woodbridge, 2006), p. 178.
[110] Although McIntosh's figures show 291 almshouses assumed closed between the 1530s and 1550s, she also includes a surprising number (75) founded in the same period, many of which are likely to have been refoundings. The total estimated number of institutions in existence thereby falls from 601 in the 1530s to 429 in the 1550s (71% of the 1530s total).
[111] Canterbury Cathedral Archives CC/S/24/ 1 Alderman Bunce's Register of Loans and Charitable Donations to the City of Canterbury (1798), pp. 371, 400-414.

institution in the diocese, Kepier Hospital, was surrendered.[112] The tiny hospitals of St Edmund King and Martyr in Gateshead and St John's, Barnard Castle, suffered many attempts at confiscation of their lands and revenues. Barnard Castle was the site of a pitched battle in Elizabeth's reign between rival claimants for the hospital, who showed no interest in or concern for the three poor almswomen; while St Edmund's position was finally settled by a new charter from James I and its re-founding as King James' Hospital.[113]

The picture was not uniform throughout the country. The county of Warwickshire, which had few monastic foundations amongst its medieval hospitals, retained none after the Reformation, possibly because of the relative lack of church influence in the county, divided as it was between the bishoprics of Worcester and Lichfield. In other places the lack of survival may be principally a reflection of the poor response to need shown by the medieval church locally, or of the corruption of many foundations and the resulting lack of local interest in saving institutions of dubious usefulness. Where institutions were valued for the service they provided to the local poor, strenuous efforts were often made by local people to save them from the King's commissioners. This was the case, for instance, at Norwich where St Giles', known as the Great Hospital, was transferred to the city corporation in 1547 and was providing fifty-seven beds by 1645.[114]

Other potential casualties of the dissolution were the many almshouses attached to guilds and chantries, when these too were abolished in Edward VI's

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[112] Clay, *Medieval Hospitals*, p. 233.
[113] DRO D/HH 10/17/170 St John's Hospital, Barnard Castle; NRO SANT/BEQ/5/1/3 Thomas Bell's Collections re King James' Hospital.
[114] Prescott, *English Medieval Hospital*, p. 143.

reign. These chantry almshouses, which often provided genuine support for poor people in return for their prayers, had a good chance of surviving, albeit with the loss of their priests and their function, as did almshouses provided by guilds. In many towns, guild almshouses were able to survive when town corporations were allowed to buy back the guild's property, as at Stratford-upon-Avon, when the town's Holy Cross guild almshouses came under the control of the new town corporation in 1553, or in Coventry, where the city commonalty bought Ford's Hospital and its lands after their forfeiture to the crown in 1547.[115]

While the survival of pre-Reformation almshouses and hospitals may have been greater than previously thought, and certainly greater than many contemporary commentators seemed to suggest, survival was not according to any systematic plan.[116] The institutions which remained, apart from those in the towns, were not necessarily in the places where the need was most pressing. If social need had been the most important motivation for founders, as Prescott alleged, it might have been expected that the new foundations would be designed to fill the gaps left by this incomplete survival, yet in only a few places does this seem to have been the case. There is occasional evidence that a benefactor might have been responding to specific problems in their locality. For instance, the town of Bromham in Wiltshire, where Sir Henry Baynton founded his almshouse in 1612, was a weaving centre which was affected by the decline in industry in the early seventeenth century. In a petition to the Wiltshire justices in 1622, the weavers of Bromham claimed there were 44 idle looms and 800

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[115] HCPP no. 15 (1826), p. 544; HCPP no. 28 (1834), p. 166.
[116] Orme & Webster, *English Hospital,* provide a useful description of the confused position of the hospitals during the period of the Reformation, and the lack of a coherent government policy towards them, p. 157.

unemployed people in the parish.[117] By the time the Reverend Nicholas Chamberlaine founded his almshouse in Bedworth, Warwickshire, in 1715, the town's fortunes were improving as coalmining became an established industry. But when Chamberlaine had first arrived in the town in 1662 Bedworth was seriously impoverished, and this may have had a lasting influence on his perception of the needs of the town.[118] These specific concerns, however, seem to be have been unusual.

The chronology of new foundations does suggest, nonetheless, that at least some founders were influenced by contemporary concerns about social need. Elizabeth Prescott claimed that the 1598 Act for erecting hospitals 'encouraged an outburst of building', with the foundation of almshouses reaching 'a new climax' about 1600.[119] Marjorie McIntosh refers to 'the great burst of support for almshouses and hospitals in the Elizabethan period'.[120] McIntosh's tables show the 1580s as the key decade, predating the legislation Prescott thought so significant.[121] In the counties examined for this project, although numbers are much smaller, the noteworthy decade is the 1570s, once again predating the legislation (Figure 3.1, below). In both Warwickshire and Kent this was the decade with the highest number of foundations of any decade

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[117] R.B. Pugh, *The Victoria History of Wiltshire,* vol. 7 (London, 1953), p. 180.
[118] Bedworth had an astonishing 79% households exempt from the hearth tax in 1670, the highest of any Warwickshire parish. Arkell & Alcock (eds), *Warwickshire Hearth Tax*, p. 55.
[119] Prescott, *English Medieval Hospital*, p. 73.
[120] McKintosh, *Poor Relief in England*, p. 188.
[121] Ibid., Appendix B, p. 302.

across the whole period, and it saw the only post-Reformation foundation in county Durham until the 1630s.[122]

Figure 3.1 Almshouse foundations by decade
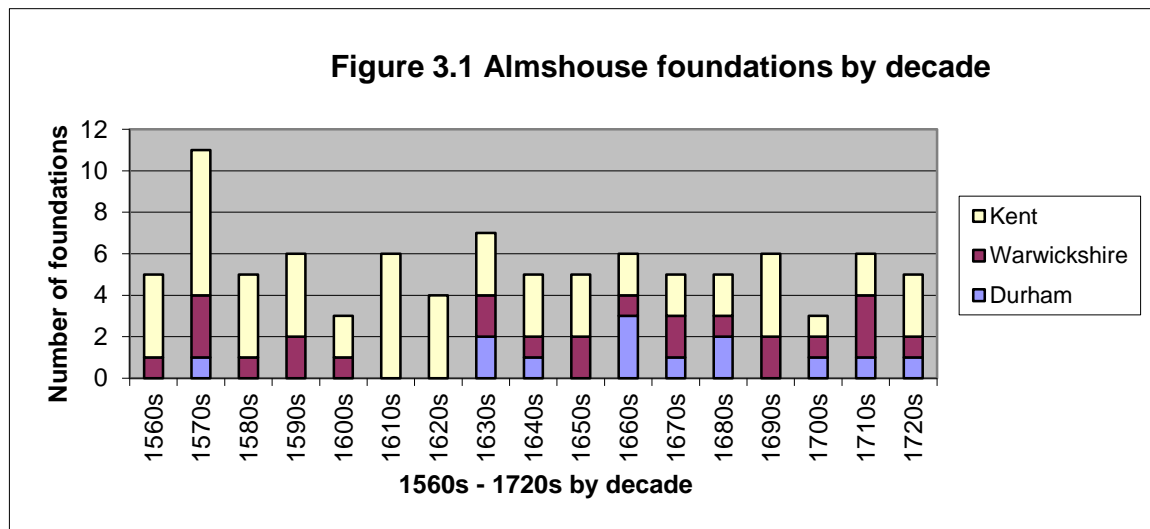
Source: Appendix 1

In this table also, of the six foundations from the 1590s, four came into being before the 1598 legislation, implying this was not the major motivating factor. Rather, these Elizabethan foundations suggest a link with poor relief policy formation and legislation, particularly the debates surrounding the important 1570s statutes. In other words, they were a direct response to the contemporary welfare agenda.

The early surge in post-Reformation foundations apparent in McIntosh's statistics, and remarked upon by Prescott, however, seems to have been principally a southern phenomenon, as McIntosh acknowledges. The county of Durham, for instance, saw no foundations between 1500 and 1632.[123] Out of the county's eighteen medieval hospitals, only five survived the Reformation, and

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[122] The Durham foundation was the Kepier Free Grammar School and Almshouse founded by John Heath and Bernard Gilpin in Houghton-le-Spring in 1574, but the almshouse was never built. The three foundations for Warwickshire in the 1710s include Yardley's almshouses in Warwick, dated 'before 1712', i.e. this date is the first reference to the almshouses, although the foundation was believed to be earlier.

[123] Apart from the Kepier Free Grammar School and Almshouse mentioned earlier.

these could hardly have been sufficient for the county.[124] In Lancashire, which had only two surviving pre-Reformation foundations, there were only three new foundations before 1632, providing a total of fourteen places across that large county.[125] This is in marked contrast to Kent, with its thirty-three foundations between 1560 and 1632; Somerset with twenty-one; and even the relatively small, poor county of Warwickshire with eight in this period. According to Jordan, in Buckinghamshire, a largely rural but reasonably prosperous county with half the population of Lancashire and only four pre-Reformation almshouses surviving, twenty-two almshouses were founded between 1557 and 1644.[126] Jordan identified the new mercantile wealth evident in his period, particularly in London, as the driver behind much of the philanthropy of the time, so that, as Thomson had suggested, the existence of surplus wealth rather than social need may have been the determining factor in the location of almshouses.[127] There were obviously differing levels of prosperity between the counties of England, and this disparity would have affected the availability of resources for endowing almshouses.[128] Figures 3.2 to 3.4 (following) map the distribution of almshouses in each of the three counties in the period 1550 to 1725, distinguishing between post-Reformation survivors and new foundations.

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[124] H.L. Robson, 'The medieval Hospitals of Durham': paper read to the Sunderland Antiquarian Society 17th November 1953, in Humphrey Simpson (ed.), *Antiquities of Sunderland and its vicinity,* Sunderland Antiquarian Society Vol. XXII (Sunderland, 1960), p. 47.
[125] W.K. Jordan, 'The Social Institutions of Lancashire. A study of the changing patterns of aspirations in Lancashire, 1480 - 1660', Chetham Society, Third Series, no. 11 (Manchester, 1962), pp. 21-25.
[126] Jordan, *Rural England,* pp. 24, 42.
[127] J.A.F. Thomson, 'Piety and Charity in Late Medieval London', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History,* vol. 16 (1965), p. 184.
[128] See also Steve King's distinction between the north and west of England and the south and east in the levels of poor relief paid by parishes, King, *Poverty and Welfare.*

Figure 3.2 Durham Almshouses c. 1550 - 1725

- Pre-Reformation survivors
- Almshouses founded 1550 – 1725

R.Tyne

Gateshead

Sunderland

Bishopwearmouth

Chester-le-Street

Houghton-le-Spring

Durham

Sherburn Hospital

Stanhope

R.Tees

Bishop Auckland

Sedgefield

Greatham Hospital

Romaldkirk

Stockton

Barnard Castle

Darlington

Source: Appendix 1.1
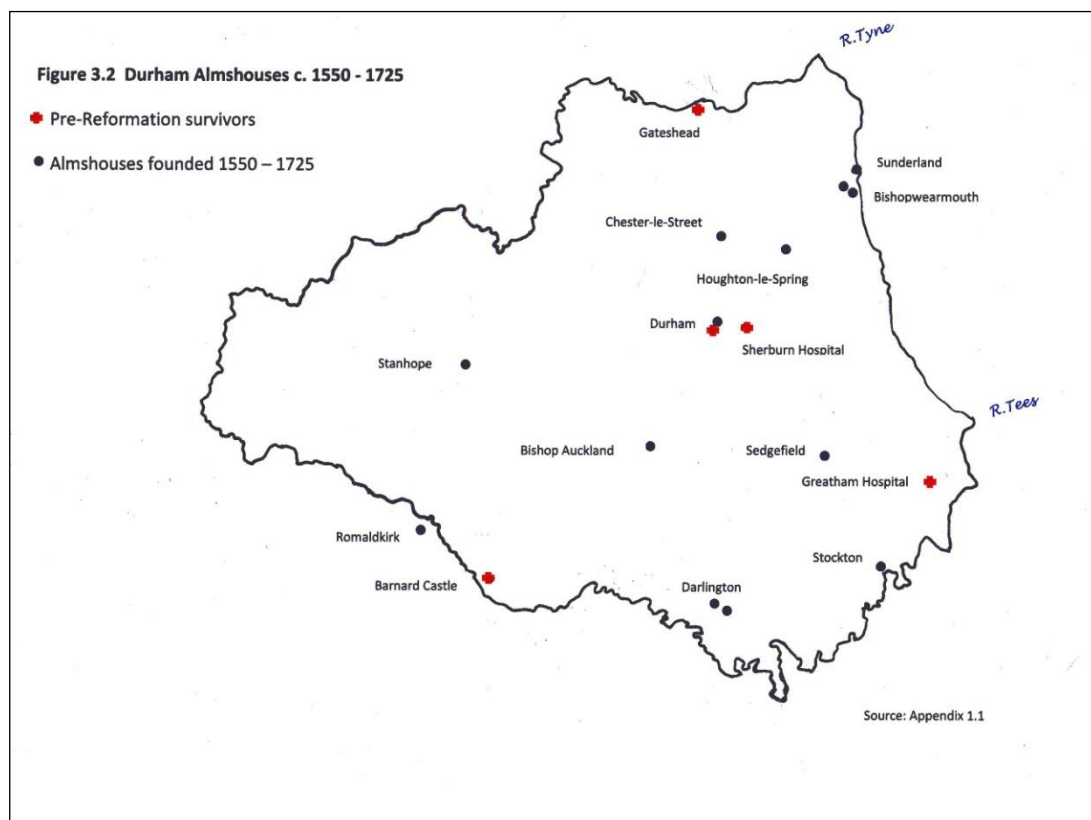
Figure 3.3 Warwickshire Almshouses c. 1550 - 1725

⬥ Pre-Reformation survivors

● Almshouses founded 1550 - 1725

Tamworth

Mancetter

Shustoke

Aston

Nuneaton

Coleshill

Bedworth

Birmingham

Coventry

Rugby

Temple
Balsall

Stoneleigh

Kenilworth

Dunchurch

Henley-in-Arden

Leamington
Hastings

Coughton

Warwick

Alcester

Stratford-
upon-Avon

Source: Appendix 1.2

81
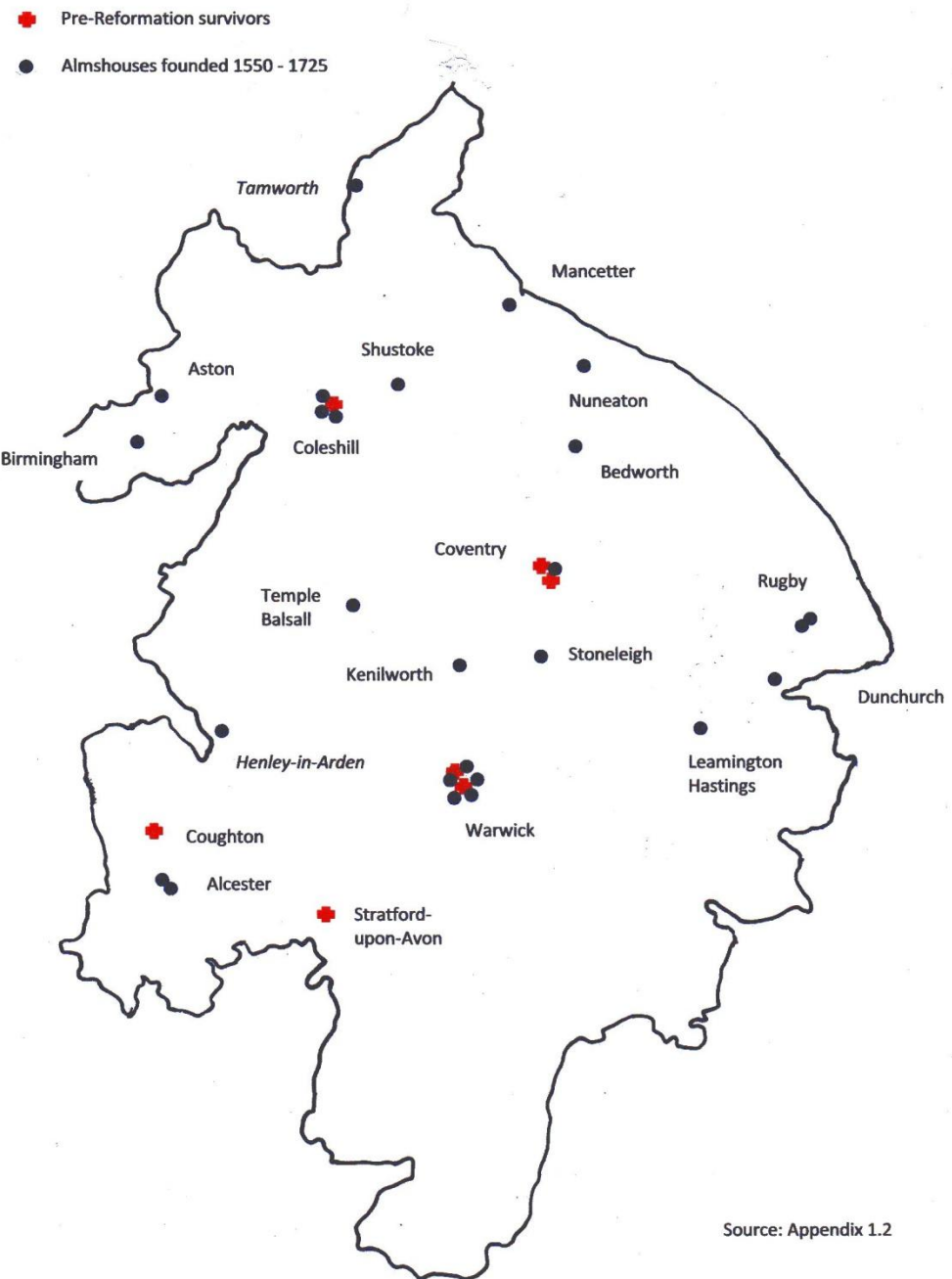
Figure 3.4 Kent Almshouses c. 1550 - 1725

＋ Pre-Reformation survivors

● Almshouses founded 1550 - 1725
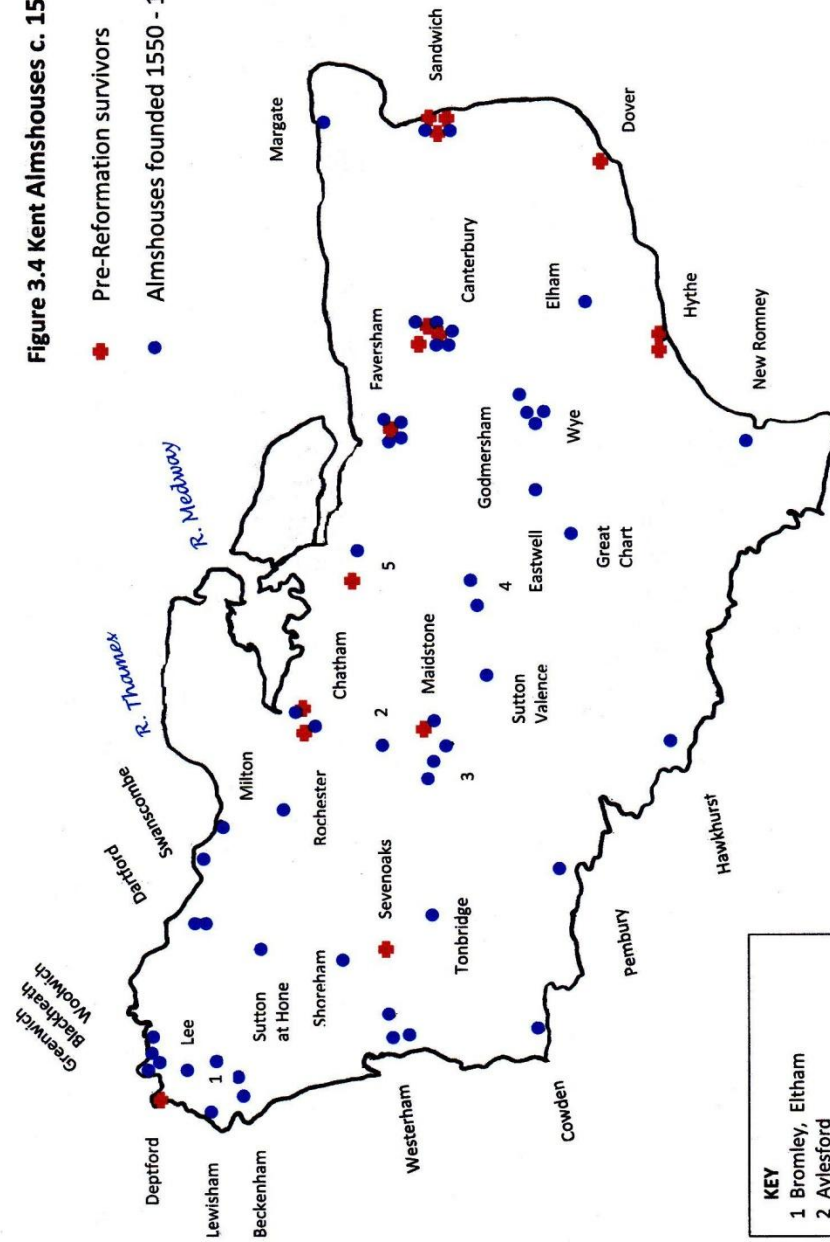
KEY
1 Bromley, Eltham
2 Aylesford
3 West & East Farleigh, Linton
4 Harrietsham, Lenham
5 Borden, Sittingbourne

Comparisons *within* counties also show that the distribution of almshouses does not entirely correlate with patterns of social need. For example, in Warwickshire, using the proportion of households exempt from paying the seventeenth-century hearth tax as a rough proxy for areas of greatest poverty, only one parish in the group with the highest proportion of exempt households has an almshouse, namely, Chamberlaine's almshouse at Bedworth, mentioned above.[129]   Most of Warwickshire's almshouses were located in the next highest band, so that in almost three quarters of parishes where almshouses were located, the proportion of exempt households was above the Warwickshire average.[130] These were mostly town parishes, such as Stratford-upon-Avon, Tamworth and Rugby, but they also included the rural parishes of Leamington Hastings and Dunchurch. Conversely, four of the five almshouse locations where the percentage of exempt households was below the Warwickshire average were rural areas, for example Coughton, Stoneleigh and Temple Balsall. Here the gentry and aristocratic founders were landowners, motivated principally by a desire to enhance their local status while providing for their tenants and dependents. The clergymen Humphrey Davis and Nicholas Chamberlaine, on the other hand, founded their almshouses, in Leamington Hastings (1607) and Bedworth (1715) respectively, in parishes with apparently significant levels of social need.[131] Elsewhere in the very poorest areas, it is

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[129] Eight Warwickshire parishes had over 55% of households exempt from paying the hearth tax. Bedworth's percentage was 79%, Arkell & Alcock , *Warwickshire Hearth Tax*, pp. 55, 155.

[130] The average percentage of exempt households across Warwickshire was 38%. Fourteen of the nineteen parishes with almshouses were above this; nine were 45% or above. Ibid., pp. 55-61.

[131] Leamington Hastings was a rural parish of 94 households where 48% were exempt, ibid. p. 58. For Bedworth, see n. 45.

possible that there were insufficient people of substance with the wherewithal to indulge in generous acts of philanthropy.

Even in urban areas where social need was greatest, the founding of new almshouses was dependent on the availability of resources. For example in the city of Coventry, once the corporation had successfully battled to save the early sixteenth-century Bond's and Ford's Hospitals, giving them access to as many as twenty residential almshouse places, only one additional almshouse appears to have been founded in the early modern period, the small almshouse for four founded at West Orchard by Alderman John Clark in 1638.[132] This is in marked contrast to the much smaller town of Warwick, also under pressure in the sixteenth century but growing more prosperous throughout the seventeenth century, which benefited from a surprising number of almshouse foundations in this period. In Warwick the number of almshouse places available increased from sixteen before the Reformation to forty-two by 1600, and an astonishing eighty places by 1712. The addition of thirty four places after the great fire of 1694 was a significant part of this increase, yet even so the contrast with the much larger city of Coventry is marked.[133]

Apart from extraordinary circumstances such as these, almshouses founders were mostly responding to generalised rather than specific concerns about poverty, influenced by public debate, polemic and sermons. The location

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[132] Places for ten men and a housekeeper at Bond's and five couples and a nurse at Ford's, John Cleary & Michael Orton, *So long as the world shall endure: the five hundred year history of Ford's and Bond's Hospitals,* (Coventry, 1991), pp. 12, 14.

[133] Twenty eight places were created by the corporation in two converted barns for the Rosemary Lane almshouse, and a further six places with the rebuilding of Oken's almshouse. WRO, '*To Divers Good Uses*' – *a directory of the Warwick Charities past and present* (Warwick, 1993), p. 16; Paul Bolitho, *Warwick's Most Famous Son. The Story of Thomas Oken and his Charity* (Warwick, 2003), p. 29.

of their foundations was influenced as much by where there were resources available as by where need was greatest, and the decision to found an almshouse was itself influenced by a number of other considerations.

The role of religion

Prior to the Reformation, the motivation behind all philanthropy is thought to have been principally religious. Rosenthal, for instance, declared that 'almost all medieval philanthropy had the purchase of prayers as their ultimate goal'.[134] The Reformation altered the nature and motivation of philanthropy, if not its effects. In the fifteenth century, in particular, it is assumed that the preoccupation of many benefactors was with the after-life, and specifically with the progress of their souls and those of their loved ones in purgatory. Many pre-Reformation almshouses, for example, were essentially chantries, of which one of the best known examples is God's House at Ewelme in Oxfordshire, founded by William and Alice de la Pole in 1437.[135] The poor men in these almshouses, often a symbolic 12 or 13 in number, were charged with an onerous programme of daily prayer, including for the souls of the founders, in return for which they received accommodation, a stipend, and sometimes food and clothing. Other almshouses in towns and villages were run by religious guilds, which also sought to ensure prayers after death for the souls of their members. For example, the guild of Corpus Christi in Maidstone, which had its chantry chapel in All Saints' church, also maintained several small almshouses in the town.[136] As McIntosh suggests, once almshouses were no longer able to offer prayers

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[134] Joel T. Rosenthal, *The Purchase of Paradise. Gift Giving and the Aristocracy 1307 - 1485* (London, 1972), pp. 10, 126.
[135] Goodall, *God's House.*
[136] Cyril Cooper, *Maidstone, A History* (Chichester, 2008), p. 13.

for the dead, the reasons for founding and maintaining such establishments 'had to be reassessed'.[137]

The linking of philanthropy with reciprocal obligations such as prayers for the soul has led some historians to utilise anthropological constructs, notably the theory of gift exchange developed by Marcel Mauss and his successors, to understand late medieval philanthropy.[138] Mauss's observation, put very simply, was that gifts were never free, but bound the recipient in a social relationship with the giver which required them to reciprocate. As a consequence, an unreciprocated gift left the recipient as the inferior in an unequal relationship, dishonoured and under a permanent obligation to the giver.[139] In this hypothesis, the abolition of the doctrine of Purgatory at the Reformation, by removing the direct purpose behind the exchange in chantry almshouses, required other sources of 'return' to be identified for post-Reformation benefactors of almshouses. Also, once prayers for the dead had been abolished, there was no longer the same clear, reciprocal relationship between the donor and the poor recipient. The 'rewards' for benefactors were thus perceived and received in other ways, for instance through memorialisation, honour and status enhancement, where the poor were not themselves the reciprocators but part of a more complex set of relationships. Meanwhile, the development of poor relief funded by compulsory taxation both undermined the

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[137] McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England*, p. 186.

[138] Rosenthal*, Purchase*; Sheila Sweetinburgh, *The Role of the Hospital in Medieval England. Gift-giving and the Spiritual Economy* (Dublin, 2004).

[139] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift. Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies,* (originally *Essai sur le don,* 1925; transl. Ian Cunnison London, 1966).

charitable principle of the gift freely given, and placed the poor recipient under an obligation with less opportunity for reciprocation.

It is possible, however, that there has been an overemphasis on the importance of purgatory and prayers for the dead in the pre-Reformation period. Margaret Aston and Colin Richmond give examples of fifteenth-century benefactors who did not request prayers for their souls, such as Sir Thomas Latimer and his wife Anne; Sir Thomas Broke of Holditch in Devon and his son Thomas; and John Tasburgh, who in 1473 'left a house and land for poor people to live in, with no provision for prayers for his soul'.[140] Colin Richmond also remarks on the 'careless' attitude of the Pastons towards purgatory, neglecting to create the perpetual chantry intended by their forebear Judge William Paston.[141] Even when prayers for the dead were specified, in some cases this seems to have been mere convention rather than the result of heart-felt conviction. The fifteenth-century mercer Richard Whittington, for instance, who was Mayor of London three times during the reigns of Richard II and Henry IV, gave an enormous fortune to various charitable causes in London. These included a library, a refuge for unmarried mothers, and a 120 seat public lavatory on the banks of the Thames. In his will of 1421 he made more than 30 separate bequests, for only half of which he asked that the recipients should pray for his soul and that of his wife. His largest single bequest was for the relief of poor prisoners in London gaols. He asked his executors to dispose of the

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[140] Margaret Aston, '"Caim's Castles": Poverty, Politics and Disendowment', in Barrie Dobson (ed.), *The Church, Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester, 1984), pp. 65, 80 (n. 111).
[141] Colin Richmond, 'Religion and the Fifteenth-Century English Gentleman', in Dobson (ed.), *Church, Politics, Patronage*, p. 195.

residue of his estate in works of charity for the good of his soul, from which they established the almshouse attributed to him.[142] This seems a somewhat casual instruction if concern for the afterlife was his overriding motivation. Also, a concern for public toilets and poor prisoners, while of public benefit, does not seem to be the most obvious priority for someone wanting to guarantee prayers for their soul were diligently delivered after their death.

Whittington was mayor of London at the time Lollardy was at its height. The Lollards disparaged chantries because they advantaged the souls of wealthy benefactors over those of poorer people, diverted resources from the poor, and enriched a corrupt church.[143] Although Wycliffe's writings were condemned as heretical in 1382 and his Lollard followers irredeemably tainted with treason after Oldcastle's rising in 1414, Lollard beliefs arguably continued to influence popular attitudes to piety and charity throughout the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.[144] So it is that, for at least some pre-Reformation founders of almshouses, easing their soul's passage through purgatory was not the over-riding motivation, even perhaps for those whose establishments came in the guise of chantries. Donors tended to follow tradition, using the structures and forms of giving familiar to them, and as historians such as Miri Rubin and Elizabeth Prescott have shown, almshouses in the medieval period showed themselves to be remarkably adaptable institutions, often borrowing traditional

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[142] Jean Imray, *The Charity of Richard Whittington. A History of the Trust administered by the Mercers' Company, 1424 – 1966* (London, 1968), pp. 2-8.
[143] Number seven of the Lollards' Twelve Conclusions. H.S. Cronin, 'The Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards', *The English Historical Review,* vol. 22, no. 86 (April 1907), p. 299; Aston'"Caim's Castles"', p. 56.
[144] Robert Lutton, *Lollardy and Orthodox Religion in pre-Reformation England: Reconstituting Piety* (Woodbridge, 2006), pp. 100-1.

forms even when their function had changed, to reflect changing attitudes and meet new needs.[145] Many almshouses founded in the fifteenth century, moreover, were very modest, providing accommodation only as a 'bare act of relief', with no attempt at creating a quasi-religious institution, and this was also true for many sixteenth-century foundations.[146]

The emergence of civic humanism in the early sixteenth century has also been credited with influencing attitudes to the poor and the intentions of donors.[147] Much medieval philanthropy could be viewed as principally for the good of the donor, with the benefit to poor recipients being merely incidental rather than the major purpose of the donation, as poverty was assumed to be an ineradicable part of the human condition.[148] Humanists such as Juan Luis Vives, however, argued for a rational, organised approach to poor relief in European cities, which would lead not only to the eradication of social ills such as crime and begging, but would have a rehabilitative purpose, enabling the poor to lead ordered lives of Christian piety.[149] While this arguably had more of an influence in Continental cities, there is evidence, particularly in the Kentish towns, of well-organised systems of poor relief pre-dating the Tudor legislation. Historians of the late medieval and early modern periods are increasingly acknowledging continuities across the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and emphasising the

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[145] Prescott, *English Medieval Hospital*; Miri Rubin, 'Development and change in English Hospitals, 1100 - 1500', in Lindsay Granshaw & Roy Porter (eds), *The Hospital in History* (London & New York, 1989), pp. 41-59; Miri Rubin, 'Imagining Medieval Hospitals. Considerations on the cultural meaning of institutional change', in Jonathan Barry & Colin Jones (eds), *Medicine & Charity before the Welfare State* (London, 1991), pp. 14-25.
[146] Rubin, 'Development and change', p. 56.
[147] McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England*, p. 21.
[148] Kreider, *English Chantries*, p. 66.
[149] Juan Luis Vives, *De subventione pauperum* (1526), in F.R. Salter (ed.), *Some early tracts on poor relief* (London, 1926).

gradual rather than the cataclysmic nature of the social and religious changes occurring. The recent historiography of the Reformation in England, for instance, suggests a gradual, albeit fundamental, shift in beliefs and practice over time, rather than the previously competing ideologies which depict either abrupt, imposed disjunction or the survival, unchanged, of popular religion. Similarly, aspects such as the secularisation of charity and the development of parish-based structures of poor relief have been shown convincingly by historians such as Peregrine Horden and Marjorie McIntosh to have been not uniquely Tudor achievements but a continuation of developments occurring in the fifteenth century or earlier.[150]

Almshouses, a form of welfare provision with a long history, appear to be an example of this continuity, with many early modern benefactors motivated by similar philanthropic considerations as their late medieval predecessors, and adopting the same traditional forms for their establishments. Jordan's claim that the rise in charitable giving he observed (itself a contested claim) was part of a cultural revolution, 'a momentous shift from men's primarily religious preoccupations to … secular concerns' is difficult, if not impossible, to substantiate.[151] His distinction between religious and secular concerns was misleading, and a gross oversimplification, as historians such as Thomson were quick to point out.[152] The use of the term 'secular' by Jordan was in fact intended to denote a lay institution, one that was not *ecclesiastical,* rather than not *religious.* He included bequests to almshouses in the secular category of

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[150] McIntosh, 'Local responses'; Horden, 'Small Beer?'; McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England*.
[151] Jordan*, Philanthropy,* p. 16.
[152] Thomson, 'Piety and Charity', pp. 178-195.

'the poor', despite the religious character of many of them. As he himself acknowledged, many donors were deeply pious, even those making bequests for purposes he categorised as secular.

Subsequent historians have shown that there was little distinction between Protestants and Catholics in charitable giving.[153] Although Protestants no longer officially believed in good works as a route to salvation, they were eager to promote charitable giving and concern for the poor as a reflection of their faith and piety, which suggested that God had chosen them to be saved. The nuances of the theology of justification by faith probably passed the majority of the population by, and for many the link between Christian salvation and charity remained unbroken.[154] The Christian tradition of charity based on the seven works of bodily mercy survived the Reformation and underpinned a wide range of social provision gifted to their communities by individual benefactors. This connection is made explicit in the inscription from Matthew Chapter 25 on the wall of the almshouses (now demolished) founded at Bromham in Wiltshire by Sir Henry Baynton in 1612. (Figure 3.5). The injunction to treat the poor as if they were Christ himself was unaffected by the Reformation and would have been instantly recognised by Christians of all allegiances. Yet the inclusion of the last sentence 'Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you', seems to suggest a direct link between good works and salvation which ought to have been at odds with the family's Protestantism.[155]

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[153] For instance, Slack, *Poverty and Policy*, pp. 8-10.
[154] McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England*, pp. 20-1.
[155] Alison Wall, 'Baynton family (per. 1508-1716)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/71877 (accessed 18 Jan 2013).

Figure 3.5 Inscription on the almshouses at Bromham, Wiltshire (1612)

I WAS HUNGRIE AND YEE
GAVE MEE MEATE. I WAS
THIRSTIE AND YEE GAVE MEE
DRINKE. I WAS NAKED AND
YEE CLOTHED MEE. I
WAS HARBARLES AND YEE
GAVE MEE LODGINGE. CUM
YEE BLESSED OF MY FATHER
INHERIT THE KINGDUM
PREPARED FOR YOU.

From Sidney Heath, *Old English Houses,* p.29. (The inscription is now in the church of St Nicholas, Bromham)

More unusually, Sir Henry's name does not appear on the inscription, neglecting the opportunity to be commemorated in perpetuity. For many other benefactors, this was an obvious 'return' to be achieved through their charitable acts.

Memorialisation

Medieval chantries, with their rounds of obits and prayers for the souls of the departed, had functioned as perpetual remembrance of the lives and works of the founders. Peter Marshall has shown how the abolition of prayers for the dead resulted in their replacement by a post-Reformation emphasis on individual memorialisation, through tombs, monuments, sermons, even dinners; and the development of a culture of commemorative charity which was distinctly Protestant.[156] Almshouses, with their combination of explicit charitable purpose and their distinguishing features of permanence and physicality, presented

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[156] Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 265-308.

particular opportunities for memorialisation. For example, the Devon merchant John Waldron inscribed his almshouse in 1579: *Remember the Poor,* but with the insignia of a merchant ship and his initials also on the plaque the subtext is clearly: 'Remember John Waldron'.

Figure 3.6 Plaque on Waldron's Almshouse, Tiverton, Devon (photo: AN)

Figure 3.7 Berkeley arms above almshouse door, Worcester (photo: AN)

In one of the most spectacular examples of self-aggrandisement masquerading as philanthropy, the slightly later Hospital of the Blessed Trinity in Guildford, founded in 1617 by George Abbot, Archbishop of Canterbury, has a magnificent gatehouse towering over the High Street in the town of his birth (Figure 3.8).

Figure 3.8 Abbot's Hospital, Guildford (photo: Matthew Alexander)

Memorialisation was not only achieved through architecture but through the liveries and insignia worn by the almspeople, through communal events such as the trustees' annual dinner, through the naming of the foundation, or all of these. For instance, Robert Dudley instructed that the almshouse he founded in Warwick for old soldiers should be known as The Hospital of Robert, Earl of Leycester. His almsmen wore uniform cloaks of black or blue, and silver badges with his insignia of the bear and ragged staff, suggesting household livery, and they processed to church on Sundays to sit in allocated seats in the centre of the nave where they could be seen by all. Yet there were obviously less

expensive ways of ensuring that benefactors were remembered. A weekly distribution of bread in church on Sunday would ensure the gratitude of the greatest number, most often; while a grand memorial in church would only entail a one-off payment, and be seen by all. Some benefactors managed this as well (for instance, Dudley and Abbot).

The wording of the Bromham inscription interestingly suggests that the type of social need considered worthy of charity was already circumscribed by the early years of the seventeenth century. The line 'I was harbourless and ye gave me lodging' has been substituted here for its equivalent from the King James Bible, 'I was a stranger and ye took me in', with its dangerous suggestion of indiscriminate charity to strangers – outsiders, the unknown – who could not be vouched for as deserving.[157] As well as the ubiquitous leper hospitals, very many medieval hospitals had been founded to provide accommodation for poor travellers, including pilgrims. With the abolition of pilgrimages and the major concern about vagrancy in the sixteenth century, this was no longer considered an appropriate function. Despite this, a few almshouse founders did still try to cater for poor travellers in the sixteenth century (see chapter 4). Most almshouses, however, did little to address what were seen by contemporaries as amongst the most pressing social evils of the time: that is, idleness and vagrancy. Traditional foundations for poor travellers were mostly allowed to decay, and despite government encouragement, few benefactors chose to

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[157] According to the Victoria County History for Wiltshire, 'the text does not appear to be drawn from any one contemporary version of the Gospel and it is probable that the mason drew on a faulty memory when incising this familiar almshouse text'. Pugh, *Victoria History of Wiltshire*, p. 186. It seems hardly likely, however, that the inscription on such an important building was left to the discretion of the mason; and though inaccurate or misremembered, was most probably a deliberate rendition of what was seen as a more acceptable version of the text.

endow workhouses and houses of correction. There were exceptions, such as Sir Roger Manwood, whose portfolio of philanthropic endowments in the late sixteenth century appears to be a direct response to the government's policy agenda discussed in chapter 2. His endowments included not only the provision of wool, flax and hemp to set the poor on work in six Kent parishes, a free grammar school in Sandwich 'for help of youth', and an almshouse at Hackington 'for help and reliefe of age', but also a house of correction to restrain 'middle age & lusty bodyes' who were 'to be sett at work with straite and hard dyett and lodging and due punishment till they do so amend'.[158] The wording of Manwood's will suggests that he was deliberately aiming to establish a co-ordinated, rational scheme of assistance to meet the social needs of eastern Kent. Very many almshouse founders also established schools, often as a joint foundation or charity with the almshouse (such as at Rugby or Sevenoaks), but few founded workhouses or houses of correction, despite encouragement from the government to do so.

While a house of correction was considered a desirable institution for any community aiming to get to grips with the problems of idleness and vagrancy, and was required by law after 1576 (an injunction repeated, with more effect, in 1610), it was hardly to be expected that the inmates of such an institution would feel gratitude towards the individual who had provided the funds to set it up, however much the local community felt it had benefited from such a gift. This suggests that the anticipated gratitude of the recipients of charity was important

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[158] Sir Roger Manwood's will 12 December 1592. Canterbury Cathedral Archives (CCA) CC-Supp Ms/6 Alderman Gray's Notebook pp. 240-4.

for all but the most public-spirited benefactors, and determined the type of institution by which they chose to be remembered.[159] The more usual, popular type of provision, therefore, was for the obviously deserving aged and impotent poor. The effects of ageing could be catastrophic for the working poor if they were unable to save enough to support themselves in old age; once they became too old to earn a living, whether labouring, following a trade, or as a servant or farm tenant, they were at risk of destitution and of losing their homes. The precariousness of many poor people's existence was thus compounded by old age and disability. As a result, the old and impotent who, through no fault of their own, could no longer support themselves, were universally acknowledged as appropriate recipients of compassion and charity from the better off. When the Warwickshire justices agreed Joyce Edwards, 'aged and poor', must surrender her tenancy, for instance, they ordered the owner to pay her ten shillings a year for the rest of her life.[160] Unsurprisingly then, the great majority of almshouse foundations were for elderly and disabled people, or became used in this way.

Status, reputation and responsibility

Although the sixteenth century saw the development of statutory relief for the poor, provided out of local taxation, it was still the government's expectation that private charity would provide for most necessities, and the public were continually exhorted to be charitable. Many notable late sixteenth-century founders were members of the court or privy council, involved in the formulation

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[159] Slack, *Poverty and Policy*, p. 165.
[160] WQS Vol. I, p. 262.

of government policy, and seem to have taken a personal lead in founding almshouses as part of the policy agenda. Examples include Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester (who founded his hospital in Warwick in 1571); William Cecil, Lord Burghley (Stamford 1579); Sir William Cordell, Solicitor General and Master of the Rolls (Long Melford, Suffolk, 1580); William Brooke, Lord Cobham and Warden of the Cinque Ports (New Cobham College 1596); Matthew Hutton, Archbishop of York (Warton, Lancashire 1594); and John Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury (Croydon 1596). These men all founded almshouses during their life times, as did other prominent government officials such as Sir Roger Manwood, judge and Chief Baron of the Exchequer, (Hackington, Kent 1570); William Lambarde, Master in Chancery, Deputy Keeper of the Rolls and royal archivist (Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Greenwich 1576); and Sir John Hawkins, Admiral and Treasurer of the Fleet (Chatham 1592). This group of men, concerned as they were with the government of the kingdom and the maintenance of social order, were thoroughly versed in the debates surrounding the Tudor legislation and how best to implement policies to address social need.

At the local level, members of the gentry and the urban ruling classes, the landowners, aldermen and magistrates responsible for implementing legislation and keeping the peace, similarly gave a lead in founding almshouses. These were the people identified by Jordan as the newly influential county gentry and the 'urban aristocracy' of merchants whose charitable efforts were directed at creating lasting social and cultural institutions, such as schools and

almshouses, to address the pressing social problems of the time.[161] Yet almshouses only ever made a minor contribution to the total relief of the poor, and many donors were of lesser wealth and status than the groups Jordan regarded as typical. Similar to the earlier tradition in the fifteenth century, many new almshouses were very small, sometimes little more than cottages left to the parish for the use of the poor, and often hard to distinguish from parish housing. As McIntosh has shown, most almshouses catered for only a few people, with a median size of only six places in the second half of the sixteenth century.[162] Many were the donor's own house, left to the parish for use as an almshouse, but without any endowment. Robert Serlys of Wye in Kent, for instance, left his house called Puntowes as an almshouse for three people in 1567, while Edward Colthurst of Westerham, also in Kent, left his house called Wimbles to the parish in 1572 to be lived in by six of the parish poor.[163] This practice was given added impetus in the seventeenth century as parishes increasingly provided housing for poor parishioners as part of their poor law responsibilities, for example, Anthony Rawlins' three cottages left to the parish officers of Beckenham in 1694.[164] These bequests, like donations to the parish stock, were a popular and cost-effective way for less wealthy donors to benefit their local community.

Permanent, endowed almshouses on the other hand were an expensive way to provide for the poor, and would have required a more considered motivation. Creating a large new foundation presupposes commitment and vision as well as disposable wealth, especially since care had to be taken to

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[161] Jordan, *Philanthropy*, p. 18.
[162] McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England*, pp. 197-8.
[163] HCPP no. 30 (1837), pp. 440, 610.
[164] Ibid., p. 441.

organise the establishment and protect the investment. As an illustration, William Lambarde, the Elizabethan antiquary and lawyer, spent a total of £2,739, a vast sum for the time, on building and endowing his Queen Elizabeth Hospital at East Greenwich in 1576. To give some idea of the scale of investment involved, he had to grant to the hospital lands worth more than £2,000 in order to produce an annual income for the establishment of £83 6s. 8d., sufficient to pay the pensions of the twenty almspeople and allow for repairs to the building.[165] He also spent £16 on five acres of woodland to provide the almshouse with fuel. Even small almshouses, if they were to be properly endowed, required considerable sums. James Cramer's almshouses in Mancetter, Warwickshire, a simple row of six one roomed cottages, cost £2,000 to build and endow in 1728.[166] These are great sums to benefit relatively small numbers of people, but the permanent nature of these endowments means that the total number of people helped over the years is considerable.[167] The large initial expense, nevertheless, contrasts with equally permanent but less ostentatious forms of supporting the poor. Providing bread for the poor or paying the schoolmaster's wages, for instance, while valuable in themselves, did not provide the same opportunities to publicise and memorialise the donor's generosity.

Many almshouses were located in places of significance to the founder and their family. Thus, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, obtained his licence from the Queen to found an almshouse in either Kenilworth, site of his castle, or

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[165] Warnicke, *William Lambarde,* p. 44.
[166] Bailey, *Almshouses,* p. 148.
[167] This was Slack's point about Jordan's calculations, Slack, *Poverty and Policy*, p. 163.

Warwick, where his brother Ambrose, Earl of Warwick, had his. Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton, founded three almshouses: at Clun (1607), the family's ancient seat and the favourite hunting ground of his brother; at Castle Rising in Norfolk (1609), in memory of his grandfather, the Duke of Norfolk; and Greenwich (1614), the place where his father's death warrant had been signed.[168] Dudley's granddaughter, Lady Katherine Leveson, wife of a wealthy Staffordshire landowner, made many bequests to the poor in various counties, but chose to place her almshouse for poor women in the rural hamlet of Temple Balsall, Warwickshire. She also chose St Mary's Church, Warwick, 'where my ancestors are interred' for her memorial.[169] Thus Lady Katherine chose to place her most visible, enduring monuments in Warwickshire, to emphasise her noble family connections there.

Figure 3.9 Robert Dudley's tomb, St Mary's Church, Warwick (photo: Tony Grist)

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[168] Prescott, *English Medieval Hospital*, p. 84.
[169] WRO CR1540/6 Lady Katherine's Will. Dudley and his brother Ambrose both have their memorials in St Mary's, Warwick.

For the nobility and gentry, emphasising their territorial connections was a way of displaying local status, which in turn conferred respect and influence. In the febrile and precarious early modern world of social mobility and political uncertainty, the status of many members of the gentry and nobility was very insecure, and founding an almshouse could be one means of establishing or shoring up a reputation. It is noteworthy that both Robert Dudley and Henry Howard were the sons and younger brothers of men who had been executed for treason, and both owed their current positions of wealth and influence entirely to the favour of the current monarch, Elizabeth in Dudley's case, and James I in Howard's. Similarly, the wealthy Lady Leveson had her early years blighted by scandal and insecurity. She was the youngest daughter of Dudley's illegitimate son Robert, and her father abandoned his family after failing to prove his legitimacy. Even that conscientious public servant Lord Cobham was anxious enough about his position and reputation to demand that Shakespeare's character, Falstaff, whom Shakespeare had originally called Sir John Oldcastle, (the rebel executed for treason in the fifteenth century, and a previous holder of the Cobham title), should be renamed in case any opprobrium should attach to himself.[170] For Howard, the change in his fortunes could not have been more dramatic, as he embarked on a political career at last at the age of 63: he was made a privy councillor by James, created earl of Northampton, and had his family's lands restored. As his biographer states, 'After a lifetime of poverty and

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[170] Julian Lock, 'Brooke, William, tenth Baron Cobham (1527 - 1597)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/printable/61735 (accessed 24 April 2012).

danger, he could now lay claim to his inheritance of power and influence'.[171] The great mansion he built on the Strand was considered 'one of the finest residences in Europe' and he amassed one of the largest art collections of the period.[172] Building three sets of almshouses was another extravagant demonstration of his restored status.

For the gentry founders of almshouses, taking the lead in providing for the poor in their localities was part of the accepted network of obligation, to tenants, servants, neighbours and to the community more generally. These obligations came with land ownership, often with specific responsibilities attached to the land itself, such as the responsibilities expected of the new owners of former monastic lands to maintain 'hospitality' to the poor, (obligations which were not always scrupulously carried out by the new owners).[173] There were also obligations of status, the honour code by which people of gentle or noble birth, or those who aspired to these ranks, demonstrated through virtuous conduct their fitness for gentility. Many almshouses are physical representations of the status and influence in the locality of the benefactor.

Even modest foundations without spectacular buildings provided perpetual, visible testament to the donor's generosity, a reflection of their position in society rather than a tribute to their philanthropy necessarily. Sir Thomas Holte of Aston Hall, founder of almshouses at Aston, was one of the

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[171] Linda Levy Peck, *Northampton: Patronage and Policy at the Court of James I* (London, 1982), pp. 21-3.
[172] Ibid., p. 73.
[173] According to Richardson, most of the lands passing through the Court of Augmentations were legally encumbered in some way, with debts, corrodies, pensions, rentals or assignments. Walter C. Richardson, *History of the Court of Augmentations 1536 – 1554* (Baton Rouge, 1961), pp. 75, 428.

new baronets created by James I. His family had held land in the area for a century, and he was Sheriff of Warwickshire in 1599. He was rewarded with a knighthood for being part of the delegation which went to meet James I on his progression south to take the throne in 1603, and subsequently paid the fee to become one of the first cohort of baronets in 1612. Despite leaving £300 in his will to found the almshouses at Aston, he was not noted as particularly philanthropic. In fact, he was described by his biographer as 'proud, obstinate and revengeful'; he was accused of murdering his cook in 1605; and he remained implacably unreconciled to his son throughout the latter's life despite an attempt at mediation by the king. On completion of the magnificent Aston Hall in 1635, which surpassed in grandeur and sophistication any other house in Warwickshire at the time, he drew up an indenture for a set of almshouses to be located outside the gates of the Hall, to the east of the parish church.[174] The almshouses for ten poor of the parish of Aston were evidently intended to complement the magnificent Aston Hall, and provide the finishing touch to the grand project which stamped his position as a great landlord upon the local countryside. The almshouses do not appear to have been a priority for Sir Thomas, however, as they were not built until after his death in 1654, being completed by his grandson and heir Sir Robert Holte.

It is arguable that the physical representation of one's virtue in this way might have been most important for those with most to prove, those whose position in society was less secure or only newly established. For the nobility

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[174] Alfred Davidson, *A History of the Holtes of Aston, Baronets; with a description of the family mansion, Aston Hall, Warwickshire* (Birmingham, 1854), pp. 18-26.

and gentry, and those who aspired to be considered as such, gentility was based on birth and behaviour. Many of the county gentry in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were 'new' men whose families had acquired wealth through public office or trade, and who had used the immense opportunities provided by the sale of monastic lands to acquire property and country estates. For those unable to provide evidence of an impeccable pedigree, or whose ancestors' honour was suspect in some way, it was doubly important that their gentility or nobility could be demonstrated through their own virtuous conduct. This included not only moral and civic responsibility and leadership, but also hospitality to one's neighbours and dependents, and charitable acts for the community.[175]

Sir John Puckering was a successful lawyer, speaker of the House of Commons in Elizabeth's reign, serjeant-at-law, lord keeper of the great seal and a member of the privy council.[176] He purchased St Sepulchre's Priory, Warwick, in 1582. His son Thomas was a companion to Henry, Prince of Wales, but after Henry's death missed out on royal preferment through choosing to remain abroad on tour, and subsequently settled into the life of a country gentleman on the estates his father had purchased in Warwick. Relations with the town corporation were not always easy, however, and Sir Thomas had the misfortune to be compared unfavourably by the townspeople with a neighbouring gentry family, the Lucys of Charlecote Park. The Lucys had arrived with William the

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[175] Felicity Heal & Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales 1500 – 1700* (Basingstoke, 1994), pp. 9-10, 283, 372.
[176] N. G. Jones, 'Puckering, Sir John (1543/4 – 1596)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22860 (accessed 19 November 2012.

Conqueror and owned Charlecote since the thirteenth century. In 1626 Warwick Corporation chose Francis Lucy rather than Thomas Puckering as their member of parliament, alleging that Puckering was 'but a stranger in the country' and not 'a man of such noble hospitality as that worthy family the Lucyes'. Yet it was Puckering who, unlike his father, maintained the poor of St Michael's hospital, which became his responsibility through ownership of the Priory; established an almshouse in the Saltisford for their support; maintained the women in the Westgate almshouses from his ownership of former guild lands; and who, in 1633, provided six houses for tradesmen in Warwick on condition that they each took three poor apprentices.[177] The Lucy family presumably felt that their status and honour were sufficiently well established to require no enhancement through spectacular acts of public charity.

Puckering was not alone in being considered a 'stranger' in the shire. According to Ann Hughes, many of the seventeenth-century Warwickshire gentry 'were comparative newcomers to the shire, and the minor gentry were often of very insecure status'.[178] Sir Thomas Leigh, a wealthy mercer of London who was lord mayor in the year of Elizabeth's accession, and knighted by her, bought the estate of Stoneleigh Abbey in Warwickshire. At his death he left large sums to charitable causes, including to 'poor householders' in his home parishes in London and Warwickshire; to poor scholars at the universities and the poor prisoners of Newgate, King's Bench and Marshalsea; and the London

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[177] Mark Merry & Catherine Richardson (eds), *The Household Account Book of Sir Thomas Puckering of Warwick 1620* (Warwick, 2012), pp. 11, 16, 19.
[178] Hughes, *Politics,* p. 37.

hospitals Christchurch, St Bartholomew's and St Thomas.[179] After his death, according to his wishes, his widow Dame Alice founded almshouses for ten poor people in the village of Stoneleigh, creating a permanent symbol of his munificence in his adopted county, where his ennobled descendants subsequently turned the abbey into a spectacular country mansion. Both Puckering and Leigh can be considered as examples of the new owners of monastic lands putting wealth to 'proper' use. In this, as in the form of foundation chosen, they were responding to cultural norms about status and appropriate behaviour.

Some of the same sort of considerations could influence an urban benefactor such as Sir John Duck, a Durham butcher, alderman and mayor, who founded an almshouse at Great Lumley, Chester-le-Street in 1686. Duck's biography suggests that despite the wealth he amassed, his grand town house and his baronetcy (acquired in 1687 for helping to fund the defence of Ulster), he was never accepted by his peers. The story that he liked to promote about the origins of his success, (that when he was down on his luck a raven dropped a gold coin at his feet, providing him with the wherewithal to build his commercial success), functions as a creation myth similar to the story of Dick Whittington and the Bow bells.[180] In reality, he probably owed his success to dealing in stolen cattle. The Butchers' Company initially refused to accept his apprenticeship, and later in life he was suspected of shady dealings by Bishop

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[179] SBT DR18/13/9/1 Will of Sir Thomas Leigh.
[180] Duck had the scene depicted in a painting in his house in Silver Street (now in the Durham Museum and History Centre, St Mary-le-Bow).

Cosin.[181] The almshouse was perhaps intended to cement his reputation, imitating what someone of his standing would be expected to do; and the timing of the foundation may have been intended to influence the decision over the award of his baronetcy. His foundation, however, was not located in his home town of Durham, but in a place where he had recently bought land and where there was no local allegiance to him. He gave the oversight of the almshouse to trustees and the Mayor of Durham, but no such oversight appears to have been exercised after his death. This arrangement seems to show a fundamental misreading on Duck's part of how civic and social responsibility worked. There was no reason why the mayor of Durham should want to be involved in an institution for the benefit of people outside his jurisdiction, and the responsibility offered him no reward in terms of status or patronage. This was in contrast to Sir Roger Manwood's almshouse at Hackington, just outside Canterbury, where the oversight of the mayor of Canterbury was rewarded with an annual dinner and the sum of ten shillings. As a result, successive mayors of Canterbury exercised their responsibilities, including intervening in a legal dispute when the almspeople were not being paid their allowances, and took responsibility for raising funds by distress on the holders of the hospital lands.[182]

While benefactors made individual decisions regarding their charitable disbursements they were very much influenced by their peers or forebears. So, for instance Nicholas Eyffler, a Westphalian glazier living in Warwick, founded

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[181] Letter from Bishop Cosin to his secretary 20 August 1670, and editor's note. George Ornsby (ed.), 'The Correspondence of John Cosin D.D. Lord Bishop of Durham: together with other papers illustrative of his life and times, Part II', *Surtees Society*, vol. 55 (1872), p. 249.
[182] CCA-CC-S/7/1 St Stephen's Hospital Memorandum and Disbursements Book 1593 - 1828, ff. 27-35 (1625 - 1630).

an almshouse for four (later eight) women in 1591 similar to that founded by his friend Thomas Oken twenty years earlier. He even specified that his charity was to use the same collectors as Oken's.[183] Bond's and Ford's Hospitals, two almshouses founded in the early years of the sixteenth century in Coventry, were endowed and supported by a small tight-knit group of Coventry merchants, related by marriage and acting as one another's executors.[184] There was a similar grouping around William Lambarde at the end of the sixteenth century. Lambarde, Lord Cobham and Archbishop Whitgift each founded his own almshouse and also worked together as the first governors of Sir John Hawkins' Hospital in 1592. Cobham's daughter Elizabeth married Robert Cecil, the son of Lord Burghley, another almshouse founder. Donors tended to follow tradition, making the same sort of bequests that were common in their social circle and using the forms of charity their predecessors had favoured. It is possible that the very small number of early modern almshouse foundations in Lancashire remarked upon by Jordan may be a result of the few surviving examples of this form of provision in the county by the end of the fifteenth century, leaving only two existing institutions to inspire by example future generations of benefactors.[185]

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[183] WRO CR1618/WA12/34, Will of Nicholas Eyffler.

[184] Thomas Bond, draper and mayor of Coventry in 1497/8, founded his almshouse for the poorer members of the Holy Trinity and Corpus Christi guilds in his will of 1506. His executors included his son John, mayor in 1519/20, who built the almshouse, and William Ford, wool merchant and member of the Staple of Calais, who had been mayor in 1496/7. On his own death in 1509, Ford left money for a similar almshouse, which was built and further endowed by his executors, William Pisford, grocer and mayor in 1500/1, and William Wigston, wool merchant of Leicester. Wigston was married to Pisford's daughter Agnes, who was formerly the wife of William Ford. Cleary & Orton, *So long as the world*, pp. 11-14.

[185] Jordan, *Philanthropy,* pp. 261-2.

Philanthropy, in any case, was not necessarily an individual activity; but, particularly in the towns, could be a communal expression of social responsibility, shared values and reciprocal benefits. Some almshouse foundations were established by communal endeavour from the start, such as the Trinity House almshouses in Deptford, maintained by a tax on seamen after the mariners' guild was incorporated in 1514.[186] The Keelmen's Hospital was similarly established two centuries later in Newcastle upon Tyne with the contributions provided by the keelmen on each load of coal they carried out to the colliers' ships.[187] The London livery companies had established many almshouses for aged members in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, and the tradition of merchant philanthropy amongst Londoners was particularly extolled by Jordan.[188] Town merchants, like their London counterparts, often gave money and property for a range of social benefits, as typified by Thomas Oken's will in 1573. Amongst the 'godlie uses and purposes' he bequeathed to the town of Warwick were the almshouses; maintenance of the town's bridges, wells and roads; twelve leather fire buckets in case of fire; the wages of a preacher, a schoolmaster, the town's herdsman and beadle; bonfires and other festivities and an annual dinner.[189]

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[186] Ruddock, 'Trinity House', p. 462.
[187] Northumberland Record Office (NRO) SANT/DEE/3/20/9 Indenture 1700.
[188] Ian Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability. Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 120; Jordan, *Charities of London.*
[189] WRO CR1618/WA3/84 Copy of Thomas Oken's will.

Figure 3.10 Thomas Oken's memorial brass, St Mary's church, Warwick (photo: AN)

Oken set up an independent charity with its own collectors and trustees; but many donors left their endowment to an existing organisation, to manage the assets, collect the rents, and maintain the charity's work. Often this was the town corporation, or in London one of the livery companies.

In a well-endowed town like seventeenth-century Faversham in Kent, the corporation's assets and responsibilities were so extensive that specific officials

were appointed to oversee them. A mayor of Faversham, Robert Allen, had given a house in Partridge Lane to the town in 1601, which had been made into two almshouses; John Foad left the corporation his house behind Middle Row in 1633 to be used as an almshouse; and Thomas Knowler, mayor in 1688, gave the town two unendowed almshouses in Tanner Street. Even the house of correction was left to the town by the master of the grammar school, Robert Stone, in 1604.[190] The town officers for Faversham, appointed annually, included two governors for the almshouses, together with governors for the school, the house of correction, and the sluice and channels, as well as receivers of the corn for the poor.[191] The wardmote minute books which record the decisions and orders of the common council reveal the detailed business of running the town, including arrangements for poor relief (1560); for setting the poor on work (1638); letting a contract to provide coals for the poor from a charitable bequest (1635); commissioning repairs and arranging admissions to the various almshouses. The expanded opportunities for office-holding and patronage offered by these extensive responsibilities in towns like Faversham created 'networks of interest' and enabled many otherwise 'obscure individuals' to become involved in the public sphere of town government and welfare provision.[192] In this way charitable works, for those involved in them, were as much the architects as the products of status and reputation.

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[190] Edward Jacob, *History of Faversham* (1774; new edition, Sheerness, 1974), pp. 135, 137, 141; Duncan Harrington & Patricia Hyde (eds), *The Early Town Books of Faversham c. 1251 to 1581* (Folkestone, 2008), pp. 527-8.
[191] CKS Fa/Ac4/1 Faversham Wardmote Minutes 1633 – 1740 Pt. 1.
[192] Sandra Cavallo, 'The Motivation of Benefactors. An overview of approaches to the study of charity', in Jonathan Barry & Colin Jones (eds), *Medicine and Charity before the Welfare State* (London, 1991), p. 52.

Religious identity

Although there appears to have been little evidence to justify their anxieties, many early Protestants were sensitive to suggestions that they gave less to charity than their Catholic forebears. In a sermon from 1578, Laurence Chaderton complained, 'the papistes alwayes cast in our teeth the great and famous hospitalitie of their nobility and cleargy…which in deede are such as do stoppe our mouthes and put us Protestants to silence'.[193]   Many almshouse benefactors in the immediate post-Reformation period, nevertheless, were unequivocally Protestant. Dame Alice Leigh, widow of Sir Thomas, mercer and Mayor of London, built ten almshouses in the village of Stoneleigh, Warwickshire in 1574. She was the niece and heir of Sir Rowland Hill, the first Protestant Mayor of London. Another Warwickshire benefactor, Lawrence Sheriff, founder of almshouses in Rugby and Rugby School in 1567, received a mention in Foxe's Book of Martyrs. Most notable of all, Robert Dudley, founder of the Lord Leycester Hospital in Warwick, in 1571, was the leader of the puritan faction at court. He used his almshouse's independence from the church authorities to provide a secure base for the controversial puritan theologian Thomas Cartwright, whom he appointed Master in 1586 on his return from exile.[194] He had already been instrumental in appointing another puritan preacher and Marian exile, Thomas Lever, to the mastership of Sherburn Hospital in County Durham in 1562. Lever remained at Sherburn until his death in 1577, and was succeeded by his brother Ralph, an equally radical cleric

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[193] Laurence Chaderton, sermon (1578), quoted in Ian W. Archer, 'The charity of early modern Londoners', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society,* no. 12 (2002), p. 226.
[194] E.G. Tibbits, 'The Hospital of Robert, Earl of Leicester, in Warwick', *Transactions & Proceedings of the Birmingham Archaeological Society,* vol. LX (1936), p. 123.

described as 'a troublesome Nonconformist, and very disobedient to his Patron' (the Bishop of Durham).[195] Almshouse positions like this could provide a secure base for radical preachers, and a captive community for the exercise of their religious zeal. According to Strype's *Life of Archbishop Parker*, Thomas Lever was so concerned at the disorder and lack of obedience at Sherburn that he reported matters to his bishop, and later to Archbishop Parker when this was not successful. Lever complained that the almsmen 'he supposes were favourers of the old Superstition, and too negligent of the worship of God'.[196]

Not all benefactors were as unambiguous as these Protestant paragons. The testamentary bequests of the second half of the sixteenth century were often made by people who had lived through the religious changes, and seen the despoliation of the church. This must have had a powerful influence; for some, there may have been regrets, possibly a sense of obligation. Thomas Oken, Warwick mercer and almshouse founder, was the last master of the town's Guild of the Holy Trinity and St George in 1545, and he arguably retained traditional beliefs until his death in 1573. In his will he left most of his fortune to the benefit of the town. Oken's memorial brass in St Mary's Church probably originally read 'Of your charitye pray for the Soules of Thomas Oken and Jone his wyff'. It has clearly been altered at a later date: a replacement piece of brass has been carefully inserted with the words 'give thanks' instead of 'pray'.

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[195] George Allan, *Collectanea Dunelmensis. Collections relating Sherburn Hospital in the County Palatine of Durham* (1771), pp. 91-2.
[196] Ibid., p. 176. The allegation was probably true. At least one of the almsmen in Lever's time was Cuthbert Bell, who had been one of the four priests attached to the hospital in Mary's reign, pp. 166, 187.
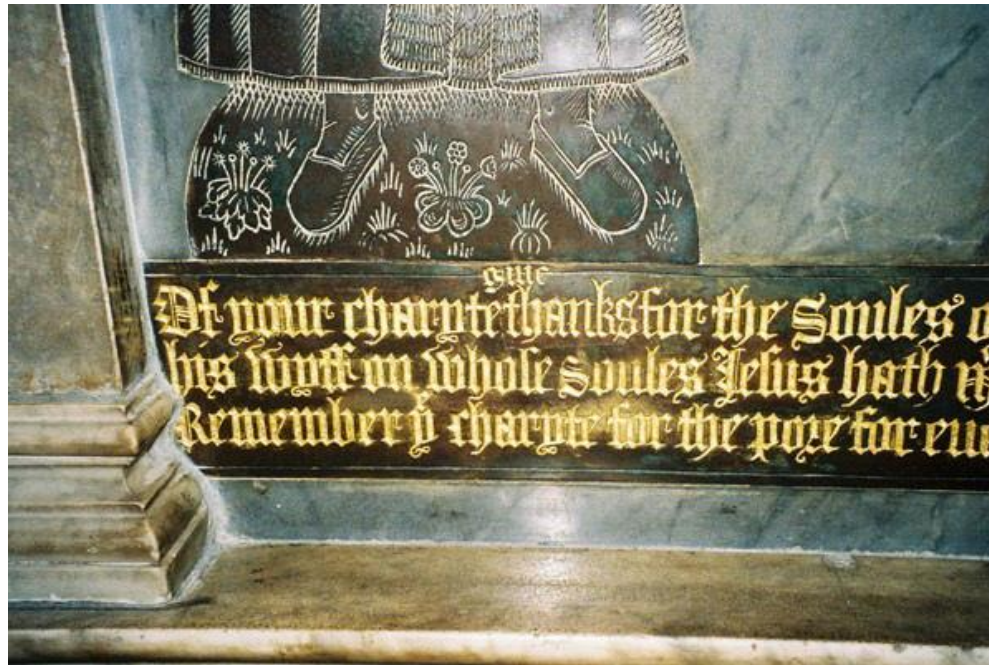
Figure 3.11 Inscription on Thomas Oken's memorial. The word 'thanks' is engraved on a piece of brass which has been inserted between 'charyte' and 'for', probably replacing the word 'pray'. 'Give' has had to be added above the line. (Photo: AN)

The motivations of a contemporary of Thomas Oken's, the goldsmith Martin Bowes, were more ambivalent (or opportunistic). He was Mayor of London in 1545/6, and represented London in five parliaments. As Alderman he profited from the sale of nine alabaster tombs and seven score marble gravestones at the dissolution of London's Greyfriars.[197] During Mary's reign in 1557 he proposed to establish a chantry in his home town of York, but dropped this plan on Elizabeth's accession. Instead he gave generously to poor relief, played a key role in establishing London's five hospitals, and endowed his own almshouse at Woolwich in 1560.[198] William Lambe was another whose earlier, more traditional, religious affiliation was replaced by a more expedient

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[197] John Stow, *A Survey of London,* quoted in Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead,* pp. 88-9.
[198] C.E. Challis, 'Bowes, Martin (1496/7 - 1566)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3055 (accessed 25 April 2012).

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Protestant identity in later life. A London clothworker and courtier to Henry VIII, he founded his almshouse at Sutton Valence in Kent in 1579. Despite (or because of) his friendship with the conforming Catholic Sir William Cordell, and 'privie whisperings' that he was a papist sympathiser, Lambe was vaunted on his death in 1580 as 'an exemplar of protestant piety'.[199]

Like their predecessors, many of the Protestant almshouses were still places of prayer, their statutes (looking very similar to those of earlier institutions) specifying daily rituals of prayer and regular church attendance. William Lambarde, mentioned earlier, is of particular interest, because he not only founded his own almshouse in 1576, but was involved in the founding and management of two other late sixteenth-century almshouses: Sir John Hawkins' Hospital in Chatham (founded in 1592), where he was a governor; and New Cobham College in Kent (founded in 1597), for which he acted as executor and as one of the first governors. Lambarde was a committed Protestant, and a friend of Archbishop Parker. The rules which he devised for his own almshouse included the provision that applicants must be honest and godly persons, who could recite, in English, the Lord's Prayer, the Articles of the Christian Faith, and the Ten Commandments. Morning and evening the almspeople were to gather for prayer; if they were absent they were fined 4d. This sounds very like a Protestant reworking of the rule at Ewelme, or at the Gainsborough almshouse founded by Lord Burgh in 1496, where even illiterate almsmen had to be able to

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[199] Ian W. Archer, 'Lambe, William (d.1580)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15929 (accessed 25 April 2012).

recite the pater noster, ave and creed.[200] Lambarde's almshouse was in many ways a model. In his role as governor, he drafted similar statutes for New Cobham College and Hawkins' Hospital. These rules were also copied by Sir John Jolles, Master of the Drapers' Company to which Lambarde had bequeathed the management of his Queen Elizabeth Hospital, when Jolles founded his own almshouse at Bow in 1617.

Lambarde was particularly concerned that acts of charity should be performed in life, rather than by will after one's death. He himself was aged only forty when he founded his almshouse, and he lived for a further twenty-five years. In 1578 he presented to the Drapers' Company, of which his father had been Warden, a silver cup inscribed: *"A Proctour for the poore am I, remember theim before thou dye".*[201] As executor to Lord Cobham he took the unusual step of persuading Cobham to transfer his property to his executors before his death so that work on the college could begin immediately. Many other sixteenth-century benefactors such as Robert Dudley, Dame Alice Owen, Sir John Hawkins, and Sir Roger Manwood founded their almshouses in their lifetimes, rather than by testamentary bequest. For Protestants like them, it was important to demonstrate that their charitable endeavours were uncorrupted by superstitious redemptive practices.

Yet, despite their Protestantism, many late-sixteenth-century founders chose explicitly to emphasise tradition. In Houghton-le-Spring, County Durham,

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[200] Colin Richmond, 'Victorian values in fifteenth-century England: the Ewelme almshouse statutes', in Rosemary Horrox & Sarah Rees Jones (eds), *Pragmatic Utopias. Ideals and Communities, 1200 – 1630* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 228; Colin Richmond, 'Religion', in Rosemary Horrox (ed.), *Fifteenth-century attitudes. Perceptions of society in late medieval England* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 199.
[201] Warnicke, *William Lambarde*, p. 49.

the noted preacher Bernard Gilpin, who had left England for the safety of the continent in Mary's reign, dedicated the Kepier Grammar School and Almshouse he helped to found in 1574 to the Holy Trinity. The Kepier name was taken from the lands of the former Kepier Priory used for the endowment; and Holy Trinity had been the name of the guild which maintained an altar in the parish church at Houghton. Many of the founders of almshouses in the immediate post-Reformation decades made similarly self-conscious efforts to retain links with older institutions. Robert Dudley founded the Lord Leycester Hospital in Warwick's medieval guildhall buildings, which he acquired from the town corporation.[202] William Cecil, Lord Burghley, founded his almshouse at Stamford in 1597 on the site of the twelfth-century hospital of St John the Baptist and Thomas the Martyr, and incorporated part of the remains in his new building.[203] Similarly, Lord Cobham founded New Cobham College using the site and the buildings of the dissolved medieval college.[204] Meanwhile, the intervention of the Protestant Archbishops Parker and Whitgift ensured the survival of two of the quasi-monastic medieval foundations in Canterbury, Eastbridge Hospital and St John's, which might otherwise have been confiscated.[205]

Alexandra Walsham has argued that Protestantism required the preservation of 'objects of iconoclastic annihilation' such as monastic ruins, in order to demonstrate that the corrupt doctrines which they represented had

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[202] Thomas Kemp (ed.), *The Black Book of Warwick* (Warwick, 1898), pp. 33-42.
[203] Crust, *Lincolnshire Almshouses,* p. 41.
[204] Godfrey, *English Almshouse,* pp. 51-2.
[205] Hill, *Almshouses of Canterbury*, pp. 14, 28.

been extinguished.[206] But many medieval almshouses and hospitals were retained as flourishing institutions rather than as ruins, or their remains were sometimes even incorporated into new foundations. Even completely new foundations adopted traditional forms, in a deliberate attempt by their founders to emphasise continuity with true religion and reclaim an honourable institution believed to have been corrupted by popery. Almshouses were an ideal vehicle through which to make these claims. They held a special place in the public consciousness, going back at least two centuries. A petition presented to Henry IV by the Commons in 1410 had declared that the lands of the Church, occupied and wasted by the bishops, abbots and priors could, if taken by the King, provide one hundred almshouses throughout the land, as well as a host of earls, knights and squires to serve the king.[207] The response, however, had merely been a statute in 1414 reforming decayed hospitals.[208]

The ideal of one hundred almshouses had appeared before, in the Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards (1395), alongside criticism of the practice of using almshouses as chantries.[209] The 'hundred almshouses' proposal reappears in the first scene of Shakespeare's Henry V (1599), when the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Ely are discussing the bill in parliament by which the commons urge the stripping of the church's temporal lands and putting the revenue to better use.[210] In an echo of Lollardy, and

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[206] Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape. Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2011), p. 148.
[207] A.H. Thomas & I.D. Thornley (eds), *The Great Chronicle of London* (London, 1983), pp. 88-90.
[208] 2 Hen. V. c. 1.
[209] Cronin, 'Lollards', p. 299.
[210] William Shakespeare, *Henry V,* Act I, scene i.

arguably validating the claims of Jordan, sixteenth-century almshouse founders were demonstrating the proper use to which wealth should be put, supporting the poor rather than the church. Protestants could answer the Catholic accusers in Chaderton's sermon by transforming these archaic institutions into showcases of reformed religion where the godly life could be seen in action, both in the charity of the donor, and in the idealised community of deserving poor, living out pious, quiet lives of work, prayer, and neighbourliness.

Meanwhile, few Catholic gentry or nobility were in a position to counter Protestant propaganda through their own acts of charity. Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton, with his three great almshouses, was an exception, as was Sir William Cordell, founder of the almshouse at Long Melford, who was a discreet but openly acknowledged conforming Catholic.[211] The insecure and impoverished position of many Catholic gentry, however, meant that few were in a position to finance large works of charity, and in any case their priorities lay elsewhere. As Pauline Croft has emphasised, after the Gunpowder Plot in James I's reign the overriding need for many Catholics was to demonstrate their loyalty to the crown, hence the large numbers coming forward to purchase the new baronetcies in 1611.[212]

'For all these men, the purchase of the new honour reinforced their county status, shaking off or at least mitigating their extensive Catholic connections. The

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[211] Michael C. Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England. Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion, c. 1550 – 1640* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 154-5.
[212] Croft calculates that 26 of the 88 baronets created in 1611 to fund the colonisation of Ulster had recusant connections. Pauline Croft, 'The Catholic Gentry. The Earl of Salisbury and the Baronets of 1611', in Peter Lake and Michael Questier (eds), *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church c. 1560 – 1660* (Woodbridge, 2000), p. 262.

financial outlay enabled them to outflank their Protestant neighbours' suspicion and hostility, while at the same time ingratiating them with central authority'.[213]

The new baronets were required to have assets worth at least £1,000 a year, and to pay £1,090 for the privilege of the baronetcy, and it is clear that some at least of the new Catholic baronets could barely afford the outlay.[214] Recusancy fines and lack of access to public office meant that Catholic families were increasingly disadvantaged financially, and most were not in a position to be notable benefactors. Recusant gentry may have continued to support their poorer tenants and retainers as far as possible, for example the Throckmortons of Warwickshire, who continued to support the almshouses in Coughton founded by Sir Robert Throckmorton in 1518 for five poor men and administered by them as a wholly private family charity, but new acts of public charity were beyond their resources.[215] As a result, the great majority of almshouses, whether medieval survivors or new foundations, were conspicuously Protestant in character.

Order and good governance – the Commonwealth and the Anglican restoration

Writers such as Prescott considered that the peak of post-Reformation almshouse foundations was over by 1630, and the 1640s inevitably saw few new foundations. Yet there were new almshouses founded during the Commonwealth, such as the unendowed almshouses in Alcester founded in 1659 by the will of John Bridges, lawyer and steward to Lord Brooke. He had

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[213] Ibid., p. 272.
[214] Ibid., pp. 273, 276.
[215] HCPP no. 15 (1826), p. 523.

been a colonel in the Parliamentary army and governor of Warwick Castle, whereby he had earned the enmity of the Warwickshire gentry.[216] This period was also characterised by examples of efforts to maintain good local administration. Thus Thomas Delaval, landowner of Hetton-le-Hole, County Durham, was in 1657 appointed one of the governors of the Kepier Free Grammar School and Almshouse in Houghton-le-Spring, which had been founded by Bernard Gilpin and John Heath in 1574. Delaval kept admirable records of income and expenditure for the charity, and was evidently concerned to carry out his duties correctly. In the accounts he noted that after he had been elected governor, perusing the statutes he found that five poor scholars and 'three poore Almsfolkes' were supposed to be paid 7d. a week from the school's income, but this had been neglected for many years. He redressed this by choosing and appointing the scholars and almsfolk, and duly paying them their allowances.[217] He then went on to devise a procedure and oath on admission for subsequent appointments.

The puritan George Lilburne, uncle of the radical John Lilburne, was a neighbour of Delaval's, and together they signed the churchwardens' accounts for Houghton-le-Spring for the year 1656.[218] Lilburne was a coal merchant in Sunderland, and mayor in the 1630s and early 1640s. During the Civil War he was the only magistrate acting in the borough of Sunderland, and was a member of Cromwell's Parliament in 1654. His son Thomas was an officer in Monck's army, and a member of parliament for Durham in 1656 and Newcastle

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[216] Hughes, *Politics*, p. 235.
[217] Thomas Delaval's Notebook. DRO EP/Ho 613.
[218] 'Churchwardens' accounts of Pittington and other parishes in the diocese of Durham from A.D. 1580 to 1700', *Surtees Society* vol. LXXXIV (1888), p. 309.

in 1659. On John Cosin's appointment as Bishop of Durham at the Restoration, Cosin demanded that 'neither George Lilburne nor his son Thomas may have any public employment in Durham', and Lilburne's house was searched for arms in 1662. Yet Lilburne gave £50 to the poor plague victims of Sunderland in 1665, and acted with Cosin's chaplain George Davenport to enhance the Kepier Free Grammar School and Almshouse Charity by building six almshouses in Houghton-le-Spring in 1668.[219] Davenport had been in exile in Paris with Cosin, and was appointed Rector of Houghton-le-Spring in 1664, the wealthiest living in the diocese. As well as building one half of the almshouses, he rebuilt the Rectory, added the chapel, and in his will left £40 to the poor of Houghton, £20 to the poor of his birthplace (Wigston in Leicestershire), and £10 to be distributed to the poor of Houghton at his funeral.[220] He is alleged to have said that 'he feared to die with any of the Church's goods in his hands' (a danger which, Surtees notes, he probably avoided). In a letter to Sancroft he wrote, 'we priests that have no wives, ought to look upon the Church and poor as our next heires'.[221] Lilburne, for his part, had the inscription 'All things come of thee O Lord And of thine own have wee given thee' placed on his part of the almshouse building.[222] It is tempting to speculate that with the almshouse the two men, Lilburne and Davenport, were engaged in a bout of competitive philanthropy, where each, while representing a very different view of how society should be

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[219] H.L. Robson, 'George Lilburne, Mayor of Sunderland', in Humphrey Simpson (ed.), *Antiquities of Sunderland and its vicinity*, Sunderland Antiquarian Society XXII (1960), pp. 92-102.
[220] Robert Surtees, *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham*, vol. I (London, 1816), p. 171.
[221] George Ornsby (ed.), 'Miscellanea', *Surtees Society* XXXVII (1861) p. xvii n.
[222] Durham University Library Special Collections (DULSC), MSP 25, f. 81v.

ordered, would not be outdone by the other in caring for the poor. The completely separate endowment and administration of the two parts of the almshouse (known as Davenport's wing and Lilburne's wing) would certainly suggest that there was only the barest minimum of co-operation between the two founders.

Bishop Cosin himself founded two almshouses in his diocese, at Bishop Auckland in 1662 and in Durham in 1666. These do not appear to have been acts of self-aggrandisement, like Archbishop Abbot's, but part of Cosin's programme of restoring authority and good order to the Anglican church in his diocese after the Restoration. The almshouses, for four and eight poor people respectively, were relatively simple foundations without grand buildings, which Cosin wished to be called 'the Bishop of Durham's Hospitalls', in other words commemorating his office rather than himself personally.[223] Cosin also restored the ruinous bishop's palace at Bishop Auckland and rebuilt its chapel as well as the two schools on Palace Green at Durham, and founded and endowed his magnificent public library on the opposite side of the Green in 1668. The library cost him £500 to build, and the collection of books he furnished it with was apparently valued at £2,000.[224] The achievement is even more notable considering that Cosin was so impoverished in exile that in 1659 he had been on the point of selling his books to maintain himself.[225]

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[223] Ornsby (ed.), 'Correspondence, Part II', p. 295.
[224] Ibid., pp. xxii, xxv.
[225] George Ornsby (ed.), 'The correspondence of John Cosin D.D. Lord Bishop of Durham: together with other papers illustrative of his life and times, Part I', *Surtees Society* vol. LII (1869), pp. xxxviii – xxxix.

The religious turbulence of the civil war and commonwealth period followed by the restoration of the monarchy and the Anglican church led to numerous disputes for the masters of almshouses who were ordained clergymen. John Machin, Master of Sherburn Hospital in Durham, was deprived of the mastership by the Scottish army in the early years of the civil war, and subsequently engaged in a lengthy legal battle to obtain his rights.[226] Similarly Raphael Pearce, Master of Lawrence Sheriff Hospital in Rugby, had his income withheld for years, leading, according to his widow, to his complete destitution and premature death.[227] It may have been conscience which prompted John Cogan, Commonwealth administrator of sequestered church lands in Kent, to leave in his will of 1657 his own house in Canterbury as an almshouse to accommodate six poor clergy widows and a servant. Ironically, the land with which he endowed the almshouse had formerly belonged to the Archbishop, and was recovered at the Restoration, impoverishing the almshouse.[228] The Restoration also led to the expulsion of ten of the residents of St John's Hospital in Canterbury in 1660. No reason for their expulsion is given in the register book. It is possible that admissions during the Commonwealth had not been carried out correctly; but one of those expelled, Jane Dun, is probably Jane Dunkin, a minister's widow admitted in 1652, suggesting that religious affiliation may have been a reason.[229] Certainly, whereas in the immediate post-Reformation period the emphasis had been on ensuring that almspeople were

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[226] William Hutchinson, *The history and antiquities of the county palatine of Durham, volume 2* (Newcastle, 1785), pp. 596-7.
[227] W.H.D. Rouse, *A History of Rugby School* (London, 1898), p. 67.
[228] Hill, *Almshouses of Canterbury*, p. 48.
[229] CCA – U13/2 St John's Hospital Admissions Book 1538 - 1557 & 1625 - 1653; U13/3 The Register Book of St John's Hospital 1659 - 1843.

Protestant rather than Catholic, in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century it was dissenters who were likely to be excluded. Nicholas Chamberlaine, for instance, in 1715 insisted that applicants for his almshouse in Bedworth should be members of the Church of England, in a town where a sizeable part of the population was nonconformist.[230]

Conclusion

It is evident, therefore, that while founding an almshouse was an essentially philanthropic gesture, undertaken in response to social need, it was not necessarily a rational response to particular problems of poverty and homelessness in old age. As the foregoing discussion has shown, almshouses might fulfil a number of other functions for donors. An increase in disposable wealth amongst certain sections of the population may not in itself have led to greater charitable giving, but it did enable a wider group of people than previously to become involved as benefactors of organised, endowed charitable institutions such as almshouses. The visibility of almshouse buildings and the presence of almshouse residents in their local communities were attractive to founders who wished to be remembered and honoured in perpetuity, while those responsible for the administration of their establishments could benefit by association from the founder's status and reputation. Although post-Reformation almshouses were necessarily secular institutions, their founders were often deeply pious and adopted many overtly religious features from earlier establishments. For some, the religious imperative was distinctly partisan,

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[230] According to the Compton census of 1676, the parish had 291 conformists, and 100 nonconformists. Alfred H. Lawrence, *The Rev. Nicholas Chamberlaine Rector of Bedworth. His Times and his Charity 1715 – 1965* (Nuneaton, no date), p.10.

inspiring them to use the almshouses they founded or ran to promote a particular religious identity. While the existence of an almshouse could help landowners fulfil their obligations to aged tenants and servants and other local poor, managing an almshouse provided opportunities for local elites to exercise patronage, involve themselves in implementing and shaping local resources for the poor, and in establishing a culture of good governance and social stability in their communities.

4. Almshouse occupants and the experience of almshouse life

'Respectable, gowned, Trollopian worthies'?[1]

There is a general assumption that most, if not all, almshouse occupants were respectable, elderly, poor men and women, living quietly ordered lives in sheltered retirement. With the range and diversity of founders and institutions outlined in the preceding chapter, however, it might be expected that the recipients of an almshouse place would be similarly diverse. Medieval almshouses and hospitals had catered for a range of different needs, including the sick, lepers and travellers, but with the development of more permanent accommodation from the fifteenth century the clientele became more commonly elderly and disabled people, but not exclusively so. In the brief analysis from which the epigraph to this chapter is taken, Paul Slack suggests that by the end of the sixteenth century there was an 'increasing fastidiousness' about who should benefit from an almshouse place, with lepers, lunatics and victims of infectious diseases increasingly excluded.[2] The process by which this marginalisation took place may be seen in the categorisation used by founders in determining eligibility for an almshouse place, but also in the type of person that trustees actually admitted. As the following discussion will demonstrate, these suggest a varied and pragmatic approach by founders and those running almshouses towards the selection of beneficiaries throughout the early modern period,

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[1] Slack, *Reformation*, p. 25.
[2] As, for instance, in the rules of admission for Lord Burghley's almshouse at Stamford, quoted by Slack, and those of his son Thomas Cecil's Lyddington Bedehouse: Charmian Woodfield & Paul Woodfield, *Lyddington Bede House Rutland* (English Heritage: London, 1988), p. 18. But these restrictions occur much earlier too, for instance in the regulations for the fifteenth-century almshouses at Ewelme and Heytesbury: Richmond, 'Victorian values', pp. 227, 232.

but with a discernible shift by the early eighteenth century towards a more limited range of beneficiaries. Yet, as with the parallel introduction of statutory poor relief in England, while the overall trajectory of this transformation in almshouse function may be unarguable, the pace and timing of these changes varied considerably.

Many almshouses were governed by rules set down by the founder, or by later patrons or trustees, covering such matters as who was eligible for a place, how they were to be chosen and with what they were to be provided. Some also included directions regarding the way the almshouse was to be run, and how the almspeople were expected to behave. Sometimes these were simply expressed in the founder's will, or not at all, in which case those administering the almshouse interpreted their duties in accordance with their own wishes and assumptions, reflecting contemporary cultural expectations about what an almshouse was and who it was for. While some almshouses had clear structures of supervision to ensure compliance with the rules, most did not, and the degree of autonomy and independence experienced by almspeople must have varied considerably. This chapter will examine, as far as possible, who were the occupants of early modern almshouses and how they were expected to live their lives. In particular it will attempt to address the questions: were they old; were they poor; and were they orderly?

Rules of eligibility

The terms almshouse and hospital were not only used interchangeably throughout the early modern period, but both could be used to denote very different types of institution, meeting the needs of very different people. This is shown most clearly in the great sixteenth-century London hospitals, which met the needs, respectively, of travellers (the Savoy); the sick (St

Bartholomew's); the old and incurable (St Thomas's); the mentally ill (Bethlehem); orphaned children (Christ's); and the idle vagrant (Bridewell). In no other city or town in England was there such a comprehensive range of provision, but in many places such as at Coventry and Ipswich there were several institutions grouped together attempting to provide this, or institutions attempting to cover more than one type of need.[3] Sometimes the name 'almshouse' might be used very loosely, merely as a place where alms were received. For instance, the Kepier Free Grammar School and Almshouse in county Durham was founded in 1574 as a school with three poor pensioners, but no accommodation was provided for the pensioners in the initial foundation.[4] At other places, for instance the medieval St Bartholomew's, Chatham, and St Mary Magdalene Hospital in Newcastle upon Tyne, while the foundation survived the accommodation had long since disappeared.[5] But generally the single unifying characteristic of an almshouse or hospital was the provision of accommodation for a number of poor people.

Yet even where accommodation was provided, it was not always envisaged that this would be for permanent residents. In a few almshouses travellers were still catered for in the post-medieval period. The almshouse 'in the moat' at Durham Castle established by Ralph Squire in 1474, which provided thirteen beds for poor travellers, was probably intended for pilgrims coming to the shrine of St Cuthbert. It survived through the sixteenth century, run by the churchwardens of St Margaret's parish, providing lodging of one day and one night for travellers coming to the city. In 1610 its foundation

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[3] Slack, *Reformation*, p. 21.
[4] DRO EP/Ho559 Foundation Document of Kepier School and Almshouse.
[5] Edward Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent, vol. 4* (1798), p. 191; NRO SANT/GUI/NCL/6/6/2 St Mary Magdalene Hospital Act (1867).

deed was altered 'as poor people were no longer allowed to wander'; it was now to cater only for the poor of St Margaret's parish.[6] Other almshouses for travellers probably met the same fate, or disappeared altogether. Some pre-Reformation almshouses were re-founded after the Reformation, still with the function of serving travellers, such as Eastbridge Hospital in Canterbury, restored by Archbishop Parker; or the Savoy Hospital in London, founded by Henry VII in 1505 to provide beds and a meal for one hundred poor people a night, suppressed by Edward VI but re-founded by Philip and Mary. (The Savoy remained an embarrassing anachronism until it was finally dissolved in 1702). But there were also new foundations for travellers. In Coleshill, Warwickshire, George Butler was one of the trustees of Richard Chapman's almshouse, founded in 1507. The original purpose of this almshouse is not known, but Butler appears to have re-established it in 1591 as an almshouse for poor travellers. Although only a small town, Coleshill was an important staging post on the main route from London to Chester, and by the time the Travellers' Rest was rebuilt in the early nineteenth century, it was accommodating 1,300 travellers a year.[7] A more famous Poor Travellers' Rest was established in Rochester by Richard Watts in 1579, in an existing almshouse adjacent to the market cross, on the main London to Dover highway. By the terms of Watts' will the almshouse was extended to provide six comfortable lodging rooms for travellers to stay one night. This was in

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[6] Allan, *Collectanea Dunelmensis,* p. 225; Harvey, *Lay Religious Life*, pp. 176-7.
[7] House of Commons Parliamentary Papers (HCPP), Reports of the Commissioners appointed to inquire concerning Charities in England and Wales, no. 29 (1835), p. 1030.

addition to the accommodation for the permanent poor almspeople who were expected to look after the almshouse and the travellers' rooms.[8]

Travellers presented a significant challenge to the authorities in early modern England, and local officials needed to distinguish between people travelling on legitimate business and disorderly vagrants. Churchwardens' accounts of the period are full of payments to people 'with a pass' to help them on their way.[9] The Parsonage Barn at Aylesford, Kent (on the London to Maidstone road) was so frequently used as a refuge by travelling people in the early eighteenth century that it was alternatively known as the Travellers' House or Beggars' House.[10] Even when relief of travellers was not part of the official remit, it is interesting that this ancient duty of hospitality was taken on by some almshouses. Christ's Hospital in Ipswich, founded by the town in 1569 at the heart of a complex of welfare provision including Tooleys' Hospital, was frequently used by the authorities to provide lodging to people passing through. These included William Lowe, 'a pore sycke man', who stayed five days in 1574, and Mary Weste, a blind wayfaring woman with three children, who remained for a fortnight over Christmas that year.[11] The seventeenth-century stewards' accounts for the Lord Leycester Hospital in Warwick show numerous small payments made at the gate to poor people including travellers, such as 1d. given in 1672 to a poor sailor 'that came

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[8] E.J.F. Hinkley, *A History of the Richard Watts Charity* (Rochester, 1979), pp. 11, 39, 131. According to Hinkley, travellers continued to be accommodated at the Travellers' Rest until 1947 (p. 24).

[9] See, for instance, the numerous entries in the churchwardens' accounts for St Mary's, Chatham, often for sailors with passes en route home, for instance from France to Cornwall or even Scotland. MALSC P85/5/2 Chatham St Mary's Churchwardens Accounts 1673 - 1686. In the eighteenth century, Hasted reported that 800 - 900 travellers journeyed annually by water from Milton (Gravesend) to London at the parish's expense. Edward Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent, Vol. 3*, (1797), Milton charities, pp. 335-346.

[10] CKS P12/12/3 Aylesford Overseers accounts 1713 - 1746.

[11] John Webb, *Poor Relief in Elizabethan Ipswich,* Suffolk Records Society Vol. IX (1966), pp. 80-1.

from Tangiers'.[12] Sherburn Hospital outside Durham was still observing this custom as late as 1735. The new rules for the Hospital that year indicate the unease that this practice provoked. In future idle vagrants were to be discouraged and punished, and only 'necessitous travellers on their honest occasions supplied'; care was to be taken that those with no legal settlement should not become burdensome to the hospital 'by an indiscreet relief'.[13]

Other almshouses providing only temporary relief and accommodation were those for the sick. While medieval and monastic infirmaries have received considerable attention from historians, it is often overlooked that some early modern almshouses continued to provide temporary care for the sick just as earlier institutions had done. The great London hospital of St Bartholomew's was re-founded in 1546 to care for London's sick, and there is evidence from the records of Kent parishes such as Hoo that people were sent from outside London to be treated there.[14] The city of Bath, which drew many sick people to use the thermal baths, had a small almshouse for poor visitors built by John Feckenham in 1576. It had seven beds and was known as the Lepers' Hospital. In 1608 a further almshouse for poor 'diseased' people coming to Bath was built and endowed by Thomas Bellott, steward to William Cecil, Lord Burghley. It was open for three months of the year during the bathing season, and could accommodate twelve people, who had to bring a certificate of support from their home parish. They were provided with their accommodation, gowns, the attendance of a surgeon, and 4d. a day, and could stay for up to 28 days in one year. People with infectious diseases

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[12] WRO CR1600/42/ 10 Lord Leycester Hospital, accounts for 1672.
[13] HCPP no. 23 (1830) p. 125.
[14] For example, the Overseers of Hoo paid John Cartar 7s. in 1671 for his journey to London to get Mary Hicks, a parish pauper, into the hospital. MALSC P/188/12 Hoo Overseers' Accounts 1601 – 1760.

were excluded, but they could be accommodated at the Leper Hospital, which had direct access into its own small bath.[15] Other almshouses with permanent occupants, such as the former guild almshouses in Maidstone, provided care to sick townspeople in times of need, such as during plague visitations.[16] This was also the responsibility of poor widows (though not necessarily almshouse occupants) in Faversham, who were paid ten shillings by the corporation for keeping people visited by the plague in 1579/80.[17]

In the towns in particular, almshouse charities might be used to meet a number of social needs. Richard Watts' charity was also designed to assist the working poor of Rochester, Kent, by the provision of flax, hemp and yarn for them to spin and work into cloth, for which they would be paid. From the accounts it seems that the charity's stock of flax and hemp was physically kept at the almshouse. In 1615 the almshouse itself (apart from the travellers' rooms) was turned into a work training centre for young children of the city. Sixteen of the 'most indigent' children (10 boys and 6 girls) were to be chosen and placed in the custody of the almshouse until they were aged eighteen (boys) or sixteen (girls), unless they were apprenticed before then. The charity accounts for the year 1619 - 1620 show that ten children were in residence, with a weaver supervising them.[18] This was still the arrangement in 1650, when the town decided that the Mayor and Aldermen should be the overseers of the children. It seems that other children were also attending the almshouse on a daily basis at this time, as the overseers were to 'take

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[15] Jean Manco, *The Spirit of Care: the eight hundred year story of St John's Hospital, Bath* (Bath, 1998), pp. 61; 74-7.

[16] In 1563 the occupants of the Maidstone town almshouses were ordered to look after plague victims or be turned out of their accommodation. Cooper, *Maidstone*, p. 23.

[17] Harrington & Hyde (eds), *Faversham*, p. 476.

[18] Hinkley, *Watts Charity,* Appendix 3 Provider's Accounts, pp. 138, 142; Appendix 4 The Agreement of 1615 Affecting Poor Children, pp. 144-5.

accompt what children doe Daily come thither to worke' and to 'send for the defaulters'.[19] In 1663 the Rochester corporation resolved to research the governance of the almshouse at Canterbury and the instruction there of poor children in spinning and carding, indicating that there was a similar arrangement in Canterbury.[20] It was very common for an almshouse to be linked to a school, as at Kepier, and, for example, at Rugby, Sevenoaks and Jesus Hospital, Canterbury. Often the schoolmaster acted as the warden of the almshouse too, as at Southlands Hospital, New Romney, and at Sir Thomas Dunk's almshouse in Hawkhurst. But the arrangements cited above for Rochester suggest this was primarily an introduction to paid work for poor children, and from the Rochester corporation minutes it is clear that the children's families were compelled to send them to the 'almshouse' for instruction.

Other towns also had children in their almshouses. The city of Coventry referred to men, women, and children as almsfolk in 1640.[21] Bablake Boys' Hospital in Coventry was founded by Thomas Wheatley in 1566 for orphans and other poor children and was located alongside Bond's Hospital for poor men and the house of correction in a group of welfare institutions. Sometimes it is not always clear, as at Faversham, whether the children referred to in these almshouses were placed with their families or on their own (as in the boys' hospital at Coventry). In a few almshouses it was clearly anticipated that occupants would be families and have their children with them. The Reverend Oliver North left a tenement in West Farleigh, Kent,

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[19] MALSC RCA/A1/1 Rochester City Corporation Meeting Book 1621 - 1653, 25 January 1650.
[20] MALSC RCA/A1/2 Rochester City Corporation Meeting Day Book 1653 - 1698, 21 December 1663.
[21] CHC BA/H/3/17/1 Coventry Council Minute Book 1557 - 1640, f. 371v.

as an almshouse for two poor families in 1725. The vicar and churchwardens were to select the occupants, who were to be industrious men and their families, either past labour or with a charge of children to maintain.[22] John Styleman, a director of the East India Company, in his will of 1734, endowed almshouses in Bexley, to be run by the minister and churchwardens for 'twelve poor and distressed familys'.[23] According to the rules of the much earlier New Cobham College (1598), the poor, their wives *and children* were to labour in the college or abroad. Another of the college's rules refers to the pensioners *and their children and servants* having to wear the college badge.[24] But elsewhere the presence of children caused consternation. Thomas Maunton was only allowed to enter the Stratford almshouses in 1608 on condition that his wife and children did not come to the almshouse to trouble the almsfolk or to dwell with him.[25] The widow Franciscus Pynder was admitted to the same almshouse in 1597 on condition that she placed the child she was caring for in service as soon as the child was old enough.[26] Presumably this was a pragmatic decision by the corporation, who might otherwise have had to take responsibility for boarding out the child elsewhere. Archbishop Whitgift indicated one of the reasons behind this concern about children in almshouses. In 1591 he raised the worrying possibility of the children of brethren and sisters of St John's Canterbury and St Nicholas Harbledown being left orphans and a charge on the hospitals in

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[22] The first two beneficiaries were Thomas Manser and William Stretfield and their families. HCPP no. 30 (1837), p. 350.
[23] K.M. Roome, *Styleman's Almshouses* (Bexley, 1985), p. 6.
[24] MALSC P336/5/1 Shorne Churchwardens' accounts 1630 - 1681, Copy of Rules relating to Cobham College.
[25] Jeanne Jones, *Family Life in Shakespeare's England. Stratford-upon-Avon 1570 – 1630* (Stroud, 1996), p. 12.
[26] Levi Fox (ed.), 'Minutes and accounts of the corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon and other records, Vol. V 1593 – 1598'*, Dugdale Society* vol. xxxv (1990), p. 100.

the event of their parents dying. He made an order similar to one he had laid down for his own hospital at Croydon, expressly forbidding the admission of children, and ruled that if parents were admitted their children must not be a charge on the hospital but provided for 'otherwise'.[27] This clearly remained a problem at St John's and St Nicholas, however, because an order was made in 1663 against brethren or sisters marrying strangers 'such as sometimes as bring a traine of children along with them'; hereafter, anyone marrying after admission would forfeit their place. Once again, in 1686 the rule was reiterated that residents were forbidden to have children or grandchildren with them except to nurse them, and only by permission of the master.[28]

A perhaps surprising feature of many almshouses was the requirement that the almspeople should work. As will be seen in the next chapter, this was an economic necessity for many almspeople, especially in less well-endowed establishments. But some almshouses in the earlier part of the period made work compulsory by a specific requirement in the rules, for instance the foundations with which William Lambarde was involved. At Hawkins' Hospital, Chatham (founded in 1592), the poor were required to 'occupie and exercise themselves dayly in such honest labors as the habilities of their bodyes will suffer'. If work were available either within the hospital or within one mile of it, nobody who was capable of work was permitted to 'live ydlie'. They would forfeit a week's allowance for a first offence, and expulsion for a third.[29] At New Cobham College (1598), Lambarde's rules stated that 'every of those poore & their wives & children being able to labor shall dayly on the working days doo some Honest labour

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[27] CCA U13/16 Memorandum Book, entry for 20th May 1591.
[28] Ibid., 19th February 1663; 1686.
[29] MALSC CH108/21 Minute Book 1617 – 1691.

either within the Coll. or abroad'. They were also required to work for any honest person within the hundred of Shamwell who offered them work they could do, and were to be fined if they refused. At his own foundation in Greenwich (1576), Lambarde had provided a plot behind the almshouse for hemp to be grown for the almspeople to work into cloth. They were forbidden from selling their share of the hemp crop, but could pay one of the other inmates to work it for them. They were also to be available to work anywhere within the Blackheath hundred if required, and fined for refusing.[30] The rules for Thomas Cecil's Bedehouse at Lyddington, Rutland (1600), required the twelve almsmen 'not to be idle but to take on some handicraft while they were able'. Amongst the first almsmen at Lyddington were a tailor, a weaver and a shoemaker, and these were convenient occupations they would presumably have been able to continue in their rooms, although it is not known to what extent, if any, these rules were implemented.[31]

Henry Pinnock's almshouses in Gravesend, known as St Thomas's almshouses from their position on the site of an earlier chapel, were slightly different in that work was the primary emphasis. They were founded in 1624 for 'poor decayed persons' of Milton and Gravesend, with a house for a master weaver to employ them.[32] In 1633 Sir Thomas Puckering established six almshouses in Warwick, to be let at nominal rents to poor tradesmen who agreed to take on apprentices.[33] The early seventeenth century was a time of innovation, when many towns in England were experimenting with various

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[30] MALSC P336/5/1 Shorne Churchwardens' accounts 1630 - 1681, Abstract of rules relating to Cobham College; Warnicke, *William Lambarde,* p. 47.
[31] Woodfield & Woodfield, *Lyddington Bede House,* p. 18.
[32] Hasted, *Kent*, Vol. 3, p. 335; Robert H. Hiscock, *A History of Gravesend* (Chichester, 1976), p. 7.
[33] WRO CR1618/WA3/89 Review of Puckering's Charity; WRO *'To Divers Good Uses'*, p. 18.

schemes for assisting the poor and providing work, and both these sets of almshouses can be viewed in this context.[34] Although the *requirement* to work occurs most often in the early part of the period, the expectation that almspeople would continue in employment is evidenced later in the period as well. For instance the Ironmongers' Company, who were given responsibility for establishing Robert Geffrye's almshouses by his will of 1704, considered a site near the City would give the almspeople opportunities for employment.[35]

Other more conventional almshouses were intended specifically for retired members of particular occupational groups such as decayed tradesmen, for example Thomas Fulnetby's almshouse in Sandwich (1625); and Napleton's almshouse in Faversham (1721). Fulnetby left four dwellings for poor tradesmen of the parish of St Mary the Virgin, Sandwich, 'in consideration of the great and dayly increase of poore people' in the parish. The tradesmen had to have been born or 'long dwelt' in the parish, and only in default of these could other poor of the parish be considered, which suggests that Fulnetby was concerned to provide for a group of tradesmen who were under pressure from the influx of poor, rather than those poor themselves.[36] On a much grander scale, for business people of higher rank, was Morden College, Blackheath, founded in 1695 for merchants who had been engaged in overseas trade, and who were 'fallen to decay by accidents of the sea or otherwise'.[37] There were similar merchant establishments in Bristol, such as the Merchant Venturers' almshouses and Colston's

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[34] See, for instance, Hindle, *On the Parish?* pp. 174-191.
[35] Neil Burton, *The Geffrye Almshouses* (London, 1979), p. 52
[36] CCA U3/173/25/6 Fulnetby's Charity, Sandwich.
[37] Joyce, *Patronage and Poverty*, p. 50.

almshouses, founded in 1696 and 1691 respectively. There was a long tradition of almshouses for particular occupational groups, many founded by craft guilds and the London livery companies.[38] Even before Hawkins' Hospital was founded at Chatham there had been almshouses for sailors in ports around the country, for instance the Trinity House almshouses in Deptford (1514), which were based on those of an earlier fraternity, the Company of Mariners; and the Seamen's Hospital in Dover, run by the town corporation, in existence before 1552.[39] Other almshouses founded for seafarers were the Royal Naval hospital at Greenwich (1694), the Fishermen's Hospital, Great Yarmouth (1702), and the Keelmen's Hospital in Newcastle upon Tyne (also 1702).[40] A number of early modern benefactors gave the management of the almshouse they founded to a London livery company, which was then able to nominate their members to a certain number of places. For instance, Michael Quested's almshouse at Harrietsham, Kent, founded in 1646, was managed by the Fishmongers' Company until 2010. Six of the twelve places were for residents of Harrietsham, but the other six were reserved for members of the Fishmongers' Company.[41]

Some occupational groups were singled out because of the particular circumstances to which they might be vulnerable, such as Fulnetby's Sandwich tradesmen. John Cogan, for instance, gave his house in Canterbury in 1658 for six widows of clergymen and a servant to assist them. Cogan was a lawyer and administrator of sequestered church lands under

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[38] Frank Rexroth, *Deviance and Power in Late Medieval London,* transl. Pamela E. Selwyn (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 236-8.
[39] Ruddock, 'Trinity House', p. 462; John Bavington Jones, *The Records of Dover* (Dover, 1920), p. 203.
[40] Howson, *Noble Poverty*, pp. 32, 110; Godfrey, *English Almshouse*, pp. 71-2;
[41] HCPP no. 12 (1825), p. 121.

the Commonwealth, and would have been acutely aware of the difficulties experienced by many clergy widows, particularly those whose husbands had been ejected from their livings in the religious turmoil of the civil war and Commonwealth. Unfortunately he endowed his hospital with sequestered lands from the archbishopric, which, when they were restored to the church at the Restoration, left his foundation seriously impoverished. Prompted by the same need, a few years later John Warner, Bishop of Rochester, founded an extremely grand and well-appointed almshouse for the widows of loyal clergy at Bromley College. The husbands of many of these would have suffered financially during the interregnum. The restriction to widows of 'loyal' clergy would, however, have specifically excluded the widows of clergy unable to subscribe to the Act of Uniformity in 1662, that is, those whose husbands had also lost their livings, and were consequently as likely to have been in need.

This emphasis on orthodox belief, rather than merely a godly life, was increasingly a feature of the criteria for admission in many almshouses, and of the regime by which the almspeople were expected to live. Whereas sixteenth-century foundations had emphasised religious orthodoxy in opposition to Catholicism, in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries this tended to be replaced by hostility to dissenters. Thus, for instance, Rev. Nicholas Chamberlaine made membership of the Church of England one of the criteria for admission to his Bedworth almshouse in 1715, in a deliberate exclusion of the twenty-five per cent of his parishioners who

were nonconformist.[42] According to its new rules of 1725, St Thomas's Hospital, Sandwich, became reserved exclusively for members of the Church of England. The reaction amongst nonconformists to these exclusions was to provide institutions of their own for worship, education and welfare. For instance, Mary Duke, around 1727, gave three houses in Maidstone to be lived in by Presbyterian women.[43] The merchant Michael Yoakley founded the Drapers' Homes in Margate in 1709, with a meeting house and burial ground attached. All the early trustees would appear to have been Quakers, and Yoakley was also a supporter of the Quaker workhouse in Clerkenwell.[44]

Sometimes a particular relationship with the founder was specified, for instance, family members or servants.[45] Robert Dudley created his hospital at Warwick not only for old soldiers but for those who had served him: 'the Servauntes and Tenauntes of Us and our heires shalbe preferred before all others'.[46] One of his hospital's almsmen, for example, was admitted from the parish of St Martin in the Fields in London, because he had previously been a servant in the patron's family, and was now 'poor, aged and blind'.[47] In his will of 1693, William Hutchinson did 'indifferently respect' whether the people admitted to his almshouse for ancient and impotent poor people at Romaldkirk were men, women, single, married or widowed, but he specified that any of his kindred in need should be 'first admitted before any other'.[48] Elizabeth Tewart of Chester-le-Street left two houses in 1718 to trustees to

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[42] In the Compton Census of 1676 one hundred families were listed as nonconformist, compared with 291 conformist families and no papists. Lawrence, *Nicholas Chamberlaine*, p. 10.
[43] Clark & Murfin, *Maidstone,* p. 92.
[44] HCPP no. 30 (1837), p. 551.
[45] Archer, 'Charity', pp. 235, 243.
[46] WRO CR1600/2 Ordinances of the Hospital of Robert Earl of Leicester, no. 7.
[47] WRO CR1600/19/33 Patron of admission for John Duglas, 13 December 1658.
[48] Will of William Hutchinson, in DRO EP/Rom 12/2 Regulations for the management of the Bowes and Romaldkirk Charities (1891), p. 5.

be used to accommodate 'two poor widows of my kindred or relations' or, if there were none, to other poor widows nominated by the minister of the parish church.[49] Similarly, Jane Gibson, founder of an almshouse for twelve in Sunderland in 1725, gave her heirs the right of nomination, and stated that her relatives were to be preferred.[50]

The most frequent and most important criteria, however, were geographical: almost invariably, people admitted had to come from the immediate neighbourhood or parish. Some founders were very specific about this, particularly in scattered rural populations. For instance, eighteen of the twenty places at New Cobham College were distributed between the surrounding parishes in specified proportions.[51] William Hutchinson's six almspeople were to come from the various villages or townships constituting the vast upland parish of Romaldkirk.[52] In these cases, community ties and belonging appear to be the overriding test of deservingness. Even when the founder had not specified who the poor were to be, or where they were to come from, the locality was usually assumed as the basis for selection, as in, for instance, Humphrey Davis's almshouse in Leamington Hastings (see chapter 6). Often the places from where almspeople could come, however, particularly if beyond the immediate locality, held special significance for the

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[49] Will of Elizabeth Tewart, DRO EP/CS 4/104 Chester-le-Street Memorandum Book of Charities, p. 28.

[50] HCPP no. 23 (1830), p. 68.

[51] 3 from Cobham; 2 from Shorne; 1 from Cooling; 2 from Strood; 3 from Hoo; 1 from Cliffe; 1 from Chalke; 1 from Gravesend; 1 from Higham; 1 from St Mary's; 1 from Cuxtone; and 1 from Hallinge. They were to be elected by the parson, churchwardens, sidesmen, overseers, constables and borsholders of each parish. The remaining two places were in the nomination of Lord Cobham and the president of the Rochester Bridge Wardens (one each). MALSC P336/5/1 Shorne Churchwardens' Accounts 1630 – 1681, Abstract of rules relating to Cobham College and the method of their election.

[52] One from the village of Cragg; one from Lartington and Naby; one from Cotherston; a fourth from Hunderthwaite, Briscoe, Hury or Baldersdale; another from Mickleton, Holwick, or Lune, and the sixth from the town of Romaldkirk itself. Will of William Hutchinson, DRO EP/Rom 12/2.

founder. The Earl of Northampton, for instance, gave twelve of the places at his Trinity Hospital, Greenwich (1613), for poor men from Greenwich, and eight for men from Shotesham, his birthplace in Norfolk.[53] Lady Leveson's Hospital at Temple Balsall in Warwickshire was for women from the parish of Balsall, but if there were insufficient of these, then women were to be chosen from Long Itchington, Warwickshire; Trentham, Staffordshire; and Lilleshall, Shropshire, all places where she owned land.[54] Lady Leveson's grandfather, Robert Dudley, had specified that the twelve places at his hospital in Warwick should be allocated in turn between five places where his family had connections.[55] This can be seen partly as the accepted responsibility of landowners, the aristocracy and gentry, for their aged tenants, servants and poor relatives. In other words, the geographical criteria for admission were heavily overlaid with personal connections, allowing individual founders and their successors to exercise patronage in the award of an almshouse place. For instance, in 1638 Alderman John Clark endowed two small houses in West Orchard, Coventry, for the benefit of the poor people of Cross Cheaping ward in the city, the selection of beneficiaries to be made by his successors as aldermen of the ward.[56]

Sometimes this exercise of patronage could trump local connections and other criteria laid down by the founder. For instance, as will be seen later, personal servants of people associated with the almshouse appear to have been admitted to Temple Balsall Hospital. Similarly, at the Lord

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[53] P.K. Kipps, 'Trinity Hospital, Greenwich', *Transactions of the Greenwich & Lewisham Antiquarian Society,* vol. 3, no. 6 (1935), p. 294.
[54] Will of Lady Katherine Leveson, WRO CR1540/6.
[55] The five were Warwick, Kenilworth, and Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire; and Wotton-under-Edge and Erlingham in Gloucestershire. In default of sufficient of these, brethren could be admitted from any town in Warwickshire. WRO CR1600/2 Ordinances of the Hospital of Robert Earl of Leicester, no, 10.
[56] HCPP no. 28 (1834), p. 290.

Leycester Hospital, John Stowe, admitted in 1650 on the recommendation of Earl Spencer to whom he had been a personal servant, was dismissed in 1656 when he was found to be ineligible.[57] A visitation of the hospital in 1705 examined allegations that the patron had appointed people from outside the five named towns who were not otherwise qualified.[58] Again, in the eighteenth century there was conflict between local interests and the patron, John Shelley Sidney, when the patron resisted attempts by the Earl of Warwick to place his nominees in the hospital.[59] The Earl had no right of patronage, but appeared to assume that his greater position of local power and influence in the town gave him the authority to countermand the regulations, and usurp the position of the patron. Incidents such as these suggest that that not all almshouse places were occupied by the founder's intended beneficiaries, but sometimes by those who owed their place to their personal connections to people of influence.

Age

The assumption is that almshouse residents were usually elderly, but only about a quarter of almshouses in the early modern period actually specified that their residents be old, and it was rare for a minimum age to be stated in eligibility criteria. (See Table 4.1 below, showing all early modern almshouses including pre-Reformation survivors).

Some almshouse founders required applicants to be 'old', but without specifying a particular age. These are shown in the tables as *'Old' only*. Examples include Eyffler's almshouse in Warwick (1591) for poor old maids

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[57] WRO CR1741/57 Extracts from Lord Leycester Hospital Old Book 1660 – 1926 in Philip Styles' notebook, p. 46. Stowe was deprived of his place because he was found to have 'an estate of his own for life and has absented himself for 3 years past'.
[58] Tibbits, 'Hospital', p.138.
[59] Ibid. The Sidney family of Penshurst in Sussex were patrons of the hospital by descent from Philip Sidney, nephew of Robert Dudley.

or other poor old women, or John and Ann Tilden's small almshouse at Wye in Kent (1642), which was for 'ancient and well reputed widows of the town'.[60] Some included old age as one of a number of conditions conferring eligibility ('*Old' or other* in the tables). For instance, New Cobham College gave first priority to a poor person who had previously been a labourer, and who had now 'become aged and … past worke and labour'. The establishment also admitted, in descending order of priority: those lamed and maimed in the service of the monarch; people born or become blind; those overtaken by 'sudden casualty' such as robbery, fire or shipwreck; the sick (but not if they were infectious); and poor people 'overcharged with a burden of children'.[61]

Table 4.1 Age criteria for admission to early modern almshouses c. 1550 - 1725				
Admission criteria	Durham	Warwickshire	Kent	Total
Specific age	3	5	8	16
'Old' only	0	1	7	8
'Old' or other	1	2	5	8
Sub-total OLD	**4** (21%)	**8** (26%)	**20** (27%)	**32** (26%)
Unspecified	13	20	49	82
Not known	2	3	4	9
TOTAL	**19**	**31**	**73**	**123**

Source: Appendix 1

Medieval almshouses often had no age specification. Almshouses which were originally for lepers or pilgrims would have catered for all ages, and chantry almshouses with their onerous prayer regimes would have been

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[60] HCPP no. 30 (1837), p. 439.
[61] Rules and Ordinances of New College Cobham, MALSC Archives Library VF COB 726.709, pp. 4-5.

unable to perform their function effectively if all their almsmen had been too old and frail to undertake their duties.[62] Yet even post-Reformation almshouses commonly had no age criteria, for instance the Lord Leycester Hospital almsmen were merely to be 'poore and ympotent persons', with no age specified.[63] Table 4.2 shows post-Reformation almshouses only, together with the inclusion of Eastbridge Hospital in Canterbury, which was refounded after the Reformation. Eastbridge was issued with new ordinances by Archbishop Whitgift, which included a minimum age of 50 on admission. Even with the exclusion of the other surviving medieval almshouses, which rarely specified old age, Table 4.2 shows that less than a third of almshouses founded in the early modern period were specifically for old people.

Table 4.2 Age criteria for post-Reformation almshouses only				
Admission criteria	Durham	Warwickshire	Kent	Total
Specific age	3	3	8	14
'Old' only	0	1	7	8
'Old' or other	1	2	4	7
Sub-total OLD	**4** (29%)	**6** (25%)	**19** (33%)	**29** (31%)
Unspecified	9	16	37	62
Not known	1	2	1	4
TOTAL	**14**	**24**	**57**	**95**

Source: Appendix 1

Yet old age and the problems it brought were a well-known feature of the early modern period. Although average life expectancy at birth remained around 35 throughout the period because of the large numbers of children

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[62] Colin Richmond, for instance, likened the almsmen suffering the regime at Ewelme to 'toilers in a Dickensian workhouse'. Richmond 'Victorian values', p. 226.
[63] WRO CR1600/2 Ordinances of the Hospital of Robert Earl of Leicester, no. 7.

dying in infancy and high mortality in the expanding towns, a person who survived infancy had a reasonable chance of living on to their 40s or 50s, or older. People over 60 constituted approximately 7% of the total population in the later sixteenth century, rising to about 10% in 1700, so older people made up a considerable proportion of the adult population and would have been a visible presence in most communities.[64] The effects of ageing could be catastrophic for the working poor, dependent as they were on their own labour, when their physical capabilities deteriorated, particularly if they had been unable to accumulate sufficient assets to buffer them in old age. Margaret Pelling's analysis of the 1570 Norwich census of the poor shows that 42% of over 60s in the city were assessed as poor, compared with 22% of adults under 60, a stark demonstration of older people's economic vulnerability.[65] The life-cycle character of poverty notwithstanding, the lack of specific age requirements for almshouse admission is unsurprising, not least because old age in the early modern period was generally defined functionally rather than chronologically, by the physical signs of ageing or the inability to perform certain tasks rather than by the attainment of a specific age. Lynn Botelho suggests that women were considered 'old' at a younger age than men, as the menopause brought obvious physical changes.[66] Similarly, poor people were seen as 'old' at an earlier age than the better off, as poor diet, hard labour and lack of physical comfort took their toll.

Illness and disability could affect people's ability to support themselves at a relatively young age, so there was no agreed age at which

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[64] E.A. Wrigley & R.S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541 – 1871: A Reconstruction,* (Cambridge, 1989), cited by Thane in *Old Age in English History,* pp. 19-20.
[65] Margaret Pelling, *The Common Lot. Sickness, Medical Occupations and the Urban Poor in Early Modern England* (Harlow, 1998), pp. 75-76.
[66] Lynn Botelho, 'The Seventeenth Century', in Pat Thane (ed.), *The Long History of Old Age* (London, 2005), p. 115.

people became eligible for an almshouse place. The great majority of early modern almshouses, in consequence, did not have an age definition in their criteria for admission, and there was no consistency amongst those that did. For instance, Bowes almshouse at Woolwich (1560) was for poor people aged over 50, and occupants of Cooper's almshouse in Sedgefield (1702) similarly had to be over 50, while Hutchinson's almshouse at Romaldkirk (1674) was for men or women, married or unmarried, but all had to be over 60 on admission unless they were disabled. Sir John Duck's almspeople in Chester-le-Street also had to be over 60, as did those of James Gramer in Mancetter (founded in 1686 and 1724 respectively). Bond's Hospital in Coventry (1507) was for men over 40, while Ford's Hospital in the same city, founded a few years later, was for couples aged about 60. Boone's almshouse at Lee (1683) was for those above a very precise 57.[67] Compulsory registration of baptism was not introduced until 1538, and so there would not have been any method of verifying an older person's exact age until the late sixteenth century at the earliest. As a result, the use of approximations for age ('about 60') and the rounding of ages was commonplace in official records, and continued well into the eighteenth century.[68]

As it became more usual over the course of the early modern period for people to know, and be able to verify, their exact age, precise age criteria for almshouse admissions became more common. Applicants for Lady Hewley's almshouse for instance, founded in York in 1704, had to 'prove

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[67] HCPP no. 8 (1823), p. 327; HCPP no. 23 (1830), p. 102; DRO EP/Rom 12/2 p. 4; HCPP no. 23 (1830), p. 29; HCPP no. 29 (1835), p. 953; HCPP no. 28 (1834), p. 135; Cleary & Orton, *So long as the world,* p. 45; Madeleine Adams & Charlie MacKeith, *Boone's Chapel: history in the making* (London, 2010), p. 1.
[68] Ottaway, *Decline,* pp. 45-6.

their age to be above fifty-five, by good testimonials if required'.[69] Two ancient foundations, Sherburn Hospital, Durham, and St Thomas's Hospital, Sandwich, which previously had no age criteria, were given new rules in the eighteenth century which introduced an age limit for the first time. The rules for St Thomas's drawn up by the trustees in 1725 established a minimum age of 50 on admission, while the 1735 rules for Sherburn Hospital introduced a minimum age of 56.[70] Even so, only half of the new foundations in the three counties from the first quarter of the eighteenth century specified that they were for older people, as shown by Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Age criteria for almshouses founded between 1700 and 1725				
Admission criteria	Durham	Warwickshire	Kent	Total
Specific age	1	2	1	4
'Old' only	0	0	1	1
'Old' or other	0	1	2	3
Sub-total OLD	**1**	**3**	**4**	**8**
Unspecified	3	2	2	7
TOTAL	**4**	**5**	**6**	**15**

Source: Appendix 1

Even when no age criteria were specified, however, many people involved with almshouse admission assumed older people to be the intended beneficiaries. For instance, Thomas Delaval, governor of Kepier Free Grammar School and Almshouse in 1658, who discovered that the appointment of almspeople by the charity had been hitherto neglected, put

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[69] *The Foundation deeds and other documents relating to Dame Sarah Hewley's charity* (London, 1849), p. 31.
[70] CKS U187/7/1 St Thomas Hospital Sandwich, 1725 hospital rules; Allan, *Collectanea,* p. 302.

this right by choosing Edward Moory, aged 74; John Birkfield, aged 75; and Henry Baker, aged 74; although the founder Bernard Gilpin had not specified that the pensioners were to be elderly.[71] But it is only possible in a very few cases such as this to establish exactly how old in practice were the people admitted to early modern almshouses. Like most of the poor generally, almshouse occupants tend to be anonymous, leaving very little mark in the historical records. Surviving admissions registers are rare, and even those that exist, such as the register of admissions to Lady Leveson's Hospital, Temple Balsall, rarely provide much in the way of biographical information about residents.[72] Occasionally information on current occupants is provided by survey or other investigation. For instance the Warwick census of the poor in 1587 records the six women in Oken's almshouses as aged 60, 80 (three of them), 100 and nearly 100.[73] These ages are highly unlikely to have been accurate. Here the census clerk was merely recording his subjective impression that most of Oken's almswomen were very old. (This example amply demonstrates just how problematic stated ages in early modern records can be, particularly in the earlier part of the period).

Similarly, the Master of Greatham Hospital in County Durham, responding to an official inquiry in 1594, was fairly imprecise about the ages of the nine brethren there, recording them as 'about the age of 50 years', or 'about the age of 70 years'. Only one of the nine Greatham brethren had an actual age recorded, but this was similarly qualified (John Worme, 'about 74'). The ages the Master recorded were from 40 to 74, with an average age

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[71] DRO EP/Ho613 Thomas Delavel's Notebook.
[72] The register of the women at Temple Balsall begins in 1678, but the women's ages are not recorded on a regular basis until 1799. WRO DR(B)36/5.
[73] Kemp, *John Fisher*, p. 169.

of 58.[74] The Master of Sherburn Hospital replied to the same 1594 investigation, and gave more precise ages for Sherburn's fifteen in-brothers and fifteen out-brothers. Their ages ranged from 30 to 90, with seven brothers in their thirties (two aged 30, two aged 32, two aged 34 and one aged 38), and an average age also of 58.[75] These were all given as current ages, rather than ages on admission, which suggests it was usual for the men at Sherburn to be admitted at ages well below that which would normally be accepted as 'old'. Perhaps to justify this situation, at the end of his list the Master of Sherburn Hospital stated that the men were all 'lame blinde impotent or other waies decaied persones'. It is possible that the men in their 30s and 40s admitted to Sherburn and Greatham Hospitals in the late sixteenth century were invalided soldiers, although the records do not state this.

The Bishop of Durham's 1593/4 investigation into almshouse provision in the diocese was part of a national survey prompted by Burghley to see whether places could be commandeered by the government for wounded soldiers.[76] Disbanded and disabled soldiers and sailors were held partly responsible for the increase in vagrancy, and the specific need for provision of this kind had been addressed by a number of founders in the second half of the sixteenth century. Henry Tooley's almshouse in Ipswich, for example, the plans for which were set out in his will of 1550, was to be for ten people 'lame by occasyon of the kynges warres', or who otherwise could

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[74] DULSC DCD/T/YB York Book, f. 120.
[75] Ibid., f. 117v.
[76] Slack , *Reformation,* p. 56.

not get their living.[77] Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, obtained a licence from Queen Elizabeth in 1571 to found a hospital for old and disabled soldiers in Warwick or Kenilworth; and Dudley's protégé, Thomas Coningsby, founded a similar institution for old soldiers or mariners in Hereford in 1612, to be known as Coningsby's Company of Old Servitors.[78] The Elizabethan sea captain and adventurer Sir John Hawkins had similarly founded his hospital for sailors in Chatham in 1592. He had previously been one of the instigators, with Sir Francis Drake and Lord Howard of Effingham, behind the creation of the Chatham Chest, the official welfare fund for disabled seamen. The ages of Leicester's and Hawkins's original almsmen are, unfortunately, not known. In the seventeenth-century Hawkins' Hospital minute book, men's ages on admission were recorded occasionally, and these men were usually elderly. William Ashby, for instance, admitted in 1643, was 81; Thomas Battle, admitted 1645, was 73; Edmund Spillman admitted in 1647 was 60; Nicholas Neale admitted the following year was 77; and Richard Smith admitted in 1651 was 76. Nicholas Neale had apparently served in the navy for over fifty years.[79]

Although ages are not given for the seventeenth-century Lord Leycester almsmen, the length of stay for some of them can be calculated from recorded admissions and deaths. Between 1625 and 1689, the length of stay for forty-five of the brethren ranged from 5 months to 36 years, with an average of 11 to 12 years. This is not dissimilar to the length of time some recipients of poor relief spent on parish pensions in the seventeenth

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[77] John Webb, *Great Tooley of Ipswich: Portrait of an Early Tudor Merchant* (Ipswich, 1962), p. 150.
[78] Prescott, *English Medieval Hospital*, p. 128.
[79] MALSC CH108/2 Hawkins' Hospital Minute Book 1617 - 1691.

century.[80] A very few men were near the end of their lives on admission to the Lord Leycester, including Thomas Carte who was granted the place of Thomas Palmer in January 1667/8, but died before he could be admitted. But six men appear to have lived at the hospital for more than twenty years, and it is unlikely that they were particularly old when admitted.[81] Using length of residence again, some of the brethren and sisters of St Nicholas and St John's in Canterbury must have been very young on admission. The register taken by the master of both institutions in 1629 records each person's name and the date of their admission. The in-brothers and sisters at St John's had an average length of stay by then of between seven and eight years, with the range from a few months to 24 years. At St Nicholas the average was ten years, with a range from 2 to 22 years. Startlingly, a few of the *out*-brothers and sisters had been receiving their pensions for many decades. Thomas Purt had been an out-brother of St John's since 1567, and he did not die until 1631, suggesting he was a very young man when first appointed. Richard Frisbye had been admitted an out-brother at St Nicholas in 1587, and Margaret Walker an out-sister in 1597. They were both still alive in 1631.

It is possible that these out-brothers and sisters were all disabled in some way. The Stratford-upon-Avon corporation determined in 1586 that none should be admitted to the Church Street almshouses under the age of 60, but made exceptions for those who were blind or crippled. For example, Mary Symson, 'the blind wench', was admitted in 1596 when she was only

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[80] Lynn Botelho identified some single women supported by the parish 'for startlingly long periods' in Suffolk, for instance ten, twenty-four and thirty-five years. Botelho, *Old Age*, p. 113. Steve Hindle estimated that the typical recipient of a parish pension was on relief for between five and twelve years, with occasional individuals receiving a pension for twenty-one, thirty-six or even forty-eight years. Hindle, *On the Parish?* pp. 278-9.
[81] WRO CR1600/19/2 Thomas Carte's patent of admission; WRO CR1741/57 Philip Styles' notebook, collation of admissions pp. 44-7.

twenty-six.[82] George Lilburn's daughter objected to the placement by the parish overseers of a blind boy in her father's almshouse in Houghton-le-Spring in 1697, not because of his youth but because her father had specified that his almspeople must be widows or widowers.[83] However, it is also likely that at least some people who would not normally be considered eligible were admitted to the benefits of an almshouse place through patronage and connections, as described earlier. In the long-running dispute between two rival factions trying to gain control over Lawrence Sherriff's school and almshouse in Rugby in the century after its foundation, for example, one of the accusations made against Sir William Boughton in 1642 was that he 'placed and displaced almsmen at his pleasure'. On one occasion he had apparently placed an able-bodied youth of twenty, one of his own tenants, in the almshouse.[84] In a similar example of an attempt by persons of influence to subvert an establishment's rules of eligibility, Samuel Jemmat, Master of the Lord Leycester Hospital, had to deal with an application in 1689 by Thomas Bredon, London pipemaker and former inhabitant of Warwick, who brought a mandate for admission from William III. Jemmat brought this embarrassing breach of the admissions procedure to the attention of the patron, saying that 'his Majesty hath been misinformed. For ye man is young & able: of a base, thievish family: and, if I mistake not, forced from this town, for some such practises'.[85]

It is clear from this evidence that not all residents of almshouses were old. Moreover, from the evidence of involvement of almspeople in tasks

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[82] Jones, *Family Life*, p. 93.
[83] DRO EP/Ho300 Letter from Jane Tooley, daughter of George Lilburne of Sunderland, 11th June 1697.
[84] Rouse, *Rugby School*, p. 62.
[85] WRO Z725/5 Correspondence relating to the Lord Leycester Hospital.

relating to the running of their establishment, it seems that in some almshouses there were residents who, regardless of age, were not particularly frail or disabled either. The 1625 patent of admission to the Lord Leycester Hospital for Francis Whetstone, yeoman of Kenilworth, stated that he was 'now growne aged and altogether unable to labour and travaile for any meanes of his livelyhood'. Yet he was fit and active enough to travel to London on hospital business in February 1631/2, and he appears to have lived on at the hospital for twenty-eight years.[86] Similarly, some of the almspeople of New Cobham College undertook an arduous journey by horse and boat in 1693 to view the college lands at Thurrock, Essex, which had been inundated by the Thames and permanently lost.[87] At the very generously endowed Virgin Mary Hospital in Newcastle, Richard Godson, one of the almsmen, was given the uncomfortable task of going round the hospital's tenants and attempting to collect rent arrears.[88] The range of labouring tasks undertaken by some of the almsmen at Jesus Hospital, Canterbury, suggests that the residents included people who were by no means incapable of physical work. Four of the brothers had to go to the hospital's wood to survey and lay out the timber in 1613; and several almsmen are named in the seventeenth-century accounts as employed in various building trades undertaking repairs around the almshouse.[89]

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[86] WRO CR1600/42/1 Hospital accounts for 1631; WRO CR1741/7 Philip Styles' notebook, collation of admissions.

[87] Accounts for 1693/4: 'Paid for horse hier and Boat hier when I went into Essex with sum of the Poore of Cobham to certifie them that their land was under water, 7s.' A.A. Arnold, *Cobham College,* (London, 1905), p. 30.

[88] Although he did not meet with physical violence he was abused and called a 'shabby fellow' by Charles Horsley, who owed rent of 8s. and considerable arrears for his house. NRO 309/A/2 Virgin Mary Hospital, Newcastle, Account Book No. 2 1686 – 1699, entry for 1 August 1687.

[89] CCA U204/F/1 Jesus Hospital Ledger 1610 – 1637.

Despite occasional abuses, nonetheless, it seems that there was a general expectation that most almspeople would be elderly. The new ordinances issued by the Bishop of Durham for Sherburn Hospital in 1735, specifying that the men were to be '56 and upwards' on admission, resulted from a visitation by the Bishop that year.[90] Prompted by this, the ages of the brethren had again been recorded. This time the youngest in-brother was 52, and the youngest out-brother 48, with the eldest being 86 and 84 respectively. It is, unfortunately, not known how old they were at the time of their admission. Many had clearly been admitted at an earlier age than the new minimum for admission, but as a group they were considerably older than the late sixteenth-century brethren. It is possible to see here at Sherburn a deliberate attempt to move the focus of the provision towards an older age range. The ability to know and verify given ages was by now well established through reference to parish records, and this would have enabled age criteria for almshouse admission to have been more effectively implemented.[91] But the change would also seem to have been a reflection of a developing culture of welfare which increasingly saw almshouse provision limited to older people. This was not a consistent or smooth progression, and exceptions and abuses doubtless still occurred, but the idea that almshouses should be mainly for older people seems to have become fixed as the norm by the end of the period.

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[90] Allan, *Collectanea Dunelmensis*, p. 302.
[91] In the parish register for Leamington Hastings, for instance, Jane Man's birth has a mark beside it in the register, presumably from where the vicar William Binckes had been checking the register to establish when and where she had been born (see chapter 6).

Gender

The majority of almshouses did not specify the gender of the inmates, or were intended for both men and women, with almshouses solely for men in an overall minority (see Table 4.4 below).

Table 4.4 Gender of almshouse occupants 1550 - 1725				
	Durham	Warwickshire	Kent	Total
Men	3	5	6	**14**
Women	6	8	8	**22**
Either/both	8	13	49	**70**
Not known	2	5	10	**17**
Total	**19**	**31**	**73**	**123**

<div align="right">Source: Appendix 1</div>

Even medieval foundations were not exclusively for men, somewhat belying traditional assumptions and the picture painted by Trollope.[92] There is a bias towards poor men in the foundations surviving from the pre-Reformation era in County Durham (three foundations for men but only one for women - see Table 4.5), but this was not replicated elsewhere or in later centuries.

Table 4.5 Gender of occupants of surviving pre-Reformation almshouses				
	Durham	Warwickshire	Kent	Total
Men	3	1	2	**6**
Women	1	1	0	**2**
Either/both	0	2	11	**13**
Not known	1	3	4	**8**
Total	**5**	**7**	**17**	**29**

<div align="right">Source: Appendix 1</div>

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[92] Clay, *Medieval Hospitals*, pp. 25-6, 147.

In the period after the Reformation, foundations for women outnumbered those for men, but both were significantly less common than those foundations which were for either or both genders. Yet in practice, women often came to outnumber men in institutions which took both men and women, unless the numbers of each gender were specified (for instance at St Nicholas Harbledown, where there were fifteen in-brothers and fifteen in-sisters, and also fifteen out-brothers and fifteen out-sisters). This is shown, for instance, by a comparison of the occupants of the Leamington Hastings almshouse in 1633 and in 1698, when the first group comprised seven men and one woman, but the later group consisted of one man, two couples and five widows, (see chapter 6, case study). Martin Bowes founded his almshouse at Woolwich (1560) for poor people, gender unspecified, but it became used exclusively for widows.[93] Similarly, Thomas Oken's almshouses in Warwick, founded in 1571 for married couples or single people of either sex, were rebuilt exclusively for women after the fire of Warwick in 1694.

It might seem that, in the same way that parish poor relief became dominated by the needs of poor widows in the seventeenth century, so mixed almshouses were increasingly colonised by poor women.[94] Even so, in the early years of the eighteenth century, new foundations were only slightly more likely to be exclusively for women than for men (see Table 4.6).

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[93] HCPP no. 8 (1823), p. 330.
[94] Wales, 'Life-cycle', pp. 351-404.

Table 4.6 Gender of early eighteenth century almshouse occupants				
	Durham	Warwickshire	Kent	Total
Men	0	1	1	**2**
Women	2	2	0	**4**
Either/both	2	1	5	**8**
Not known	0	1	0	**1**
Total	**4**	**5**	**6**	**15**

Source: Appendix 1

Many widows receiving regular parish pensions, however, were not elderly, but the heads of households with children.[95] These were not generally the circumstances of women admitted to almshouses. Lynn Botelho argued that women's experience of poverty in old age differed from that of men, with the availability of low-paid employment in some places enabling women to retain a degree of self-sufficiency in old age, but often only at a level which required some parish assistance.[96] Low paid widows working hard to avoid penury may have become the very epitome of the deserving poor, and thus more likely be considered suitable for an almshouse place. In the Netherlands the gender bias in almshouses was even more extreme, with women overwhelmingly the clientele by 1800 (154 foundations reserved entirely for women, compared with only 21 for men, and 37 for both men and women).[97] As an explanation, Goose and Looijesteijn suggest that women in almshouses were expected to be able to look after themselves in old age, whereas men were less likely to be able to do so. The parallel development of old men's homes ('oudemannenhuis') in

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[95] Hindle, *On the Parish?* p. 273-4.
[96] Botelho, *Old Age*, pp. 112-3.
[97] Goose & Looijesteijn, 'Almshouses', p. 1059.

many Dutch cities from the start of the seventeenth century, for elderly men who were unable to look after themselves, may have enabled Dutch almshouses ('hofje') to cater exclusively for women.[98] There was no equivalent to the *oudemannenhuis* in England until workhouses became common.[99] Instead, old men's strategies for survival might include remarriage to a younger spouse or being taken in by sons or daughters, both of which were more likely for older men than older women.[100] Admitting men to an almshouse was thus likely to require the provision of some form of additional support, either from relatives, from female fellow-residents, or from paid staff. The existence of servants in better-off almshouses for unmarried or widowed men, such as Sherburn Hospital and Trinity Hospital, Greenwich, may thus have been not only a mark of status but necessary, to provide this essential support.

Although women residents may have been in the majority overall, it does appear, however, that in some almshouses women were viewed as problematic. The ordinances drawn up in 1601 for the Lyddington Bede House by Thomas Cecil, Baron Burghley, specified that men need only be aged over 30 on admission, but women had to be over 45.[101] Similarly, while Sir John Hawkins made no age requirement for the sailors and shipwrights admitted to his hospital in Chatham (1592), if their wives were also to be

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[98] Ibid., p. 1064.

[99] Preliminary findings from the FACHRS Almshouse Project suggest that in nineteenth-century Hertfordshire, at least, older men were more likely to be resident in workhouses than women, while women predominated in almshouses. Nigel Goose & Stuart Basten, 'Almshouse residency in nineteenth-century England: An interim report', *Family and Community History,* vol. 12, no. 1 (May 2009), pp. 67-8.

[100] In the Norwich census of 1570, Margaret Pelling identified many examples of older men married to much younger spouses, while Alexandra Shepard calculated that as many as fifty percent of men over 65 co-resided with a child: Pelling, *Common Lot*, pp. 147-151; Margaret Pelling, 'Who most needs to marry?', in Lynn Botelho & Pat Thane (eds), *Women and Ageing in British Society since 1500* (Harlow, 2001), p. 34; Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2003), p. 241.

[101] Woodfield & Woodfield*, Lyddington Bede House*, p. 18.

admitted they must be over 50, and the men were not allowed to marry or remarry after admission.[102] The concern here was evidently that only women past child-bearing age should be admitted. Eyffler's almshouses for 'oulde Maydens of Warwicke' or other old women, made this a specific order. In 1608 the trustees required a bond on the admission of Margery Griffin, 'a poore maimed Maid, lacking one hand', stating that, as it was 'doubtfull whether yet the said Margery may bringe forth a Child or noe', the sureties had to guarantee that in the event of her becoming pregnant she would leave the hospital upon ten days' notice.[103] On admitting Matthew Blithe in 1618, Hawkins' Hospital refused admission to his wife because she was not yet 40 and had five children.[104]

In many almshouses, such as Henry Howard's foundation of Trinity Hospital at Greenwich, only unmarried or widowed men were admitted. This caused problems for Howard's secretary, John Griffith, who had the eight poor men that Howard had specified from Shotesham transported by cart from Norfolk to Greenwich in time for the grand opening on 24 February 1617, only to have to send back two of them when they were found to be married.[105] At Hawkins' Hospital, the men were allowed to have their wives with them; the statutes specified that widows were allowed to stay on in the hospital if their husbands pre-deceased them, and to receive the full stipend.[106] The governors, however, noted in 1607 that the foundation was

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[102] MALSC CH108/21 Minute Book 1617 - 1691, Statutes of Sir John Hawkins' Hospital.
[103] WRO CR1618/WA12/33/7.
[104] MALSC CH108/21 Hawkins' Hospital Minute Book 1617 - 1691.
[105] Jean Imray, 'The early days of Trinity Hospital', *Transactions of the Greenwich and Lewisham Antiquarian Society,* Vol. 9, Issue 3 (1981), pp. 118, 121.
[106] 'Anyone then lawfully married, if his wife is at least 50 years old, to be admitted also in to the hospital to cohabit with him, both to be relieved as one single person. If she outlives him, to have the whole pension for life so long as she remain in the hospital and unmarried'.

intended for twelve, yet there were only ten houses. As two of these were occupied by widows, the governors considered making them share a room and a stipend, as had been the case for widows in Ford's Hospital, Coventry before 1609.[107] This was possibly what happened at Jesus Hospital, Canterbury, when Margaret Knight and Jane Forebrace shared a sister's salary from 1630 to 1634.[108] The new rule was not implemented at Hawkins' Hospital, however, and in 1609 the numbers were officially reduced to ten.[109] However, again in 1649 the governors determined to investigate whether they were obliged to maintain the widows, as they could find no evidence that they were.[110] The governors decided they would only admit 76 year old Richard Smith into the almshouse in 1651 if he disposed of his wife elsewhere, as she was 'a scandalous liver'. She seems to have managed to gain admission, however, because in 1656, by which time she was widowed, the governors ordered that she was to have her pension suspended whenever she was 'distempered w[i]th drinke'. She was finally expelled in 1658 for disorderly behaviour, having been frequently drunk; the governors belatedly realised she had 'noe cleare admittance at the first'.[111]

Even in almshouses that allowed wives, it seems that sometimes they were only there on sufferance. The occupants of Sir Roger Manwood's Hospital at Hackington, Kent, for example, were six married couples at the time of Manwood's death in 1592. Manwood's son listed them by name in the hospital records, and beside the name of each wife he added 'of curtesye

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MALSC CH108/21 Hawkins' Hospital, Chatham, Minute Book 1617 – 1691. Reduced pensions were eventually introduced for women in the later eighteenth century.
[107] Cleary & Orton, *So long as the world*, p. 45.
[108] CCA U204/F1/1 Jesus Hospital Ledger 1610 – 1637.
[109] Cleary & Orton, *So long as the world,* p. 48.
[110] MALSC CH108/21 Hawkins' Hospital, Chatham, Minute Book 1617 – 1691, p. 172.
[111] The Deputy Governor paid 1s. for a warrant from the justices to order the Chatham overseers of the poor to provide for her. MALSC CH108/21 pp. 179, 192, 203, 205.

duringe pleasure', indicating that the wives were there by permission rather than by right.[112] At the Lord Leycester Hospital, the marital status of the men was never specified, but there do occasionally appear to have been wives living with their husbands. Sometimes wives took on the role of nurse to the other men, as did 'Nurse' Falconer, widow of almsman Edward Falconer, appearing in the accounts in 1667, and it may have been through performing tasks such as this that their presence was tolerated.[113] Although St Edmund's, Gateshead was apparently intended only for men, 56 year old Alice Pickering was one of the three occupants named in the 1593/4 inquiry. It is not known whether she was the widow of a former almsman, or was unofficially the nurse. The two other almspeople were men aged 70 and 76, and it is possible that Alice was there to look after the two elderly men.[114] This is suggested by the changes to the foundation of Ford's Hospital in Coventry in the early sixteenth century. Ford originally specified in 1509 that the foundation was for five men and one woman, but in 1517 one of his executors, William Pisford, changed this to six poor men and their wives aged over 60. Pisford's co-executor, William Wigston, however, amended this again in 1528 to five couples aged over 60, and a nurse, who was to be aged between 40 and 50.[115] Wigston's rationale for the nurse was that many people of that age (over 60) were impotent and 'not able well to keep themselves clean of their bodies'. The nurse was to wash them, cook their

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[112] For instance, 'In ye seconde howse next the streete Percevall Foster (and Elizabeth his wyffe of curtesye duringe pleasure); in the thirde Edwarde Watts (& Joane his wyffe of curtesye duringe pleasure)' etc., CCA CC-S/7/1 St Stephen's Hospital Memorandum and Disbursements Book 1593 – 1828, p. 11.
[113] WRO CR1600/31 Stewards accounts in 'The House Book'. According to the present Master, Lt. Col. Gerald Lesinski, the current rules for the Hospital officially still require widows to leave the Hospital once their husband dies, so their appointment as nurse may have been one way for them to remain in residence.
[114] DULSC DCD/T/YB York Book, f. 116v.
[115] Cleary & Orton, *So long as the world*, pp. 13-15.

food and clean their houses, 'ministering all things necessary to them when and as often as need should require'.[116]

Younger women, as long as they were not *too* young, were thus regarded as useful in helping to care for other almspeople as they became old and frail. At Temple Balsall Hospital, for instance, the younger women were expected to look after the older, with two of them paid extra as nurses from 1708.[117] At Lyddington Bede House the two women over 45 were presumably there to look after the twelve men. This mirrored the situation at Browne's Hospital, Stamford (1475), which was founded for two chaplains, ten men and two sisters, and which would have been well known to Thomas Cecil, Lyddington's founder.[118] Women in almshouses frequently seem to have been obliged to take on caring tasks, not only looking after other frail residents, but even people in the neighbourhood who were sick. The women of the ancient foundation of St John's in the centre of Sandwich were awarded twenty shillings yearly in 1614 for looking after poor people that the town sent to them.[119] While women may have been expected to be carers, men were often expected to take on senior positions, locking gates and reading prayers. The first twelve inhabitants of Sir John Duck's almshouse in 1686, chosen by him personally, were eleven women and one man. It is possible that the man, John Pots, was appointed specifically to take charge of the women.[120] Unusually, Samuel Lock's wife was paid 5s. in 1658/9 for

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[116] HCPP no. 28 (1834), p. 166.
[117] Eileen Gooder, *Temple Balsall. From Hospitallers to a Caring Community, 1322 to Modern Times* (Chichester, 1999), pp. 60-1.
[118] Cecil had his seat at Burghley just outside Stamford, and his father William's almshouse was in the same town.
[119] Sandwich Local History Society, 'Sandwich Almshouses 1190 – 1975', Occasional Paper No. 2 (no date), p. 6.
[120] DULSC MSP25, f. 135r. Foundation Charter of Sir John Duck's Hospital, Great Lumley.

reading the prayers to the other almspeople at Hawkins' Hospital, although the normal payment when performed by a man was 10s.[121]

While it would probably not be accurate, from the evidence available, to describe almshouses as gendered spaces, the position of women residents did differ from that of men. Women in almshouses, as in early modern society generally, were likely to have been subordinated to men, whether that was to other occupants for whom they had to provide caring services, or to male masters, wardens or stewards appointed over them. They were also more likely to be subject to suspicious and discriminatory admission criteria. Conversely, however, it was rare for stipends to be discriminatory in almshouses which accepted both men and women, with only a handful of almshouses paying lower stipends to women than to men (as will be seen in chapter 5). For many older women, this would have contrasted favourably with their experience of employment, while the relative comfort, status and autonomy of an almshouse place for an elderly woman was likely to have been a significant improvement on her previous circumstances.

Poverty

All almshouses were intended for poor people, but poverty is a relative concept, and there is no absolute measure to determine the economic status of people admitted to early modern almshouses. The likelihood is that this varied considerably, with sought-after places in the better-off almshouses, where stipends and benefits were generous, becoming the preserve of those with greater access to patronage and influence. Such people were unlikely to be amongst the poorest.

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[121] MALSC CH108/172 Deputy Governor's Accounts 1658 - 9.

William Lambarde's regulations for his own hospital at Greenwich (1576), and for Lord Cobham's New Cobham College (1598), specified that applicants must have been supported by their parish for three years prior to admission. In other words they were expected to be very poor, and unable to support themselves without help.[122] Yet other late sixteenth-century almshouses clearly had rather different expectations. The ordinances for the Lord Leycester Hospital, Warwick, drawn up in 1585, specified that applicants were not to be admitted if they had any other living of more than £5 a year, and at Sir John Boys' Jesus Hospital in Canterbury (1599) the upper limit was £10.[123] These limits would have allowed for the admission of people well above destitution levels. The process of admission for Jesus Hospital entailed the patron putting forward two candidates for the selection of one by the mayor. Boys' rules specified that the poorer of the two should be chosen, but it is not possible to judge whether this ever happened in practice as there is no surviving documentation giving the reason why the chosen candidate was preferred over the other. A comparison of the surnames of Jesus Hospital almspeople from the 1664 - 1687 payments ledger with entries in the 1663 or 1664 Hearth Tax assessments provides many examples of people who shared the same surname as almshouse occupants being charged on two, three, four and even six hearth houses, and just two names of non-chargeable residents, both in two hearth houses.[124] Of course it is not possible to say for certain whether these people

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[122] Warnicke, *William Lambarde*, p. 46; MALSC VF COB 726.709, Rules and Ordinances made for the New College of Cobham in the Countie of Kent, p. 4.

[123] WRO CR1600/2 Ordinances of the Hospital of Robert Earl of Leicester, no. 24; CCA CC Supp Ms/6 Alderman Gray's notebook p. 155.

[124] CCA U204/F1/3 Jesus Hospital Ledger No. 3, 1664 – 1687; D. Harrington, S. Pearson & S. Rose (eds), *Kent Hearth Tax Assessment Lady Day 1664* (London, 2000), pp. 375-6, 380-2, 436-449.

sharing surnames were related, but it is likely that some were; also exemption or otherwise from the hearth tax is no absolute guarantee of people's relative poverty.[125] The overall impression, however, is that the Jesus Hospital almspeople were members of Canterbury's better off families, perhaps preponderantly craftsmen and small tradespeople. Occupations were not recorded until the register book which commences in 1727. Between 1728 and 1742, apart from two relatives of the founder and two women appointed as nurses, the admissions were of a papermaker, a gardener, a husbandman and six silk weavers.[126]

There is evidence from other Kent almshouses that the occupants were not very poor in an absolute sense. Fifteen probate inventories of residents of St Bartholomew's, Sandwich, from 1568 to 1593, show them each occupying a suite of rooms in this medieval establishment, and leaving goods valued at between £5 and £82. The brewer Oliver Stromble and his wife, for instance, admitted to St Bartholomew's in the 1540s, were owners of valuable property in the town.[127] In 1677 Mary Wheeler, one of the sisters of St Bartholomew's, was sufficiently well-educated and experienced in business matters to compile a list of the rentals of the property of the hospital. She then represented the almspeople in a complaint to the Sandwich mayor and jurats that former hospital lands had been misappropriated, resulting in two jurats being accused of illegal possession of hospital property.[128] According to a memorandum written by the master

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[125] Tom Arkell, 'The incidence of poverty in England in the later seventeenth century', *Social History,* vol. 12 (1987), pp. 23-47.

[126] CCA U204/R2 Jesus Hospital Register Book 1727 – 1844.

[127] Helen Clarke, Sarah Pearson, Mavis Mate & Keith Parfitt, *Sandwich, 'the completest medieval town in England': A study of the town and port from its origins to 1600* (Oxford, 2010), p. 212-3.

[128] Sandwich Local History Society, *Sandwich Almshouses,* p. 12.

inside the seventeenth-century accounts book of St Thomas's Hospital, Sandwich, it was the custom at both St Thomas's and St Bartholomew's for a new almsperson to pay thirty-two shillings on admission, to be distributed amongst their fellows.[129] This was a sizeable sum, unlikely to have been payable by the genuinely poor, and the origin of this unusual requirement is unknown.

Admission fees in some form, however, were not altogether unheard-of. In some other Kent almshouses, and elsewhere, the sum of 6s. 8d. was paid on admission by new almspeople. At Stratford-upon-Avon, for example, this had been the sum traditionally paid by members of the Holy Trinity Guild on admission to the guild almshouses, and these payments continued once the almshouses were taken over by the town corporation. John Ashwell, for instance, paid the fee in 1598, but died so soon after entering the Stratford almshouses that the chamberlains charitably returned 3s. 4d. to his widow Elizabeth.[130] This payment of 6s. 8d. was not the equivalent of a medieval corrody, by which better-off people purchased a place for life in a monastery or hospital; it is probably more accurate to view it as a kind of entry fine, payable on taking up a tenancy. At Maynard's and Cotton's almshouses in Canterbury, the 6s. 8d. fee first appears in 1607 upon the admission of Robert Bynge, when it was actually referred to as a 'fyne of his entrance'.[131] At St John's Hospital in the same city, the register book records William Phipps as being admitted on 26 October 1625, 'and at his admission paid 6s.

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[129] Ibid., p. 14.
[130] Jeanne Jones (ed.), 'Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, Vol. I, 1538 – 1625', *Dugdale Society* (Stratford-upon-Avon, 2002), p. 55.
[131] CCA S/8/1 Maynard and Cotton Almshouses, Accounts 1599 – 1653.

8d. according to Custome'.[132] Here a 'corrodie' is also mentioned, but as the warrant or patent of admission from the Archbishop. Subsequent admissions of both in- and out- brothers and sisters are recorded with the same formula: 'by a corrodie from my Lords Grace and payd 6s. 8d.'. For the admission of Elizabeth Wallett in 1629, and all subsequent admissions until 1699, the 6s. 8d. fee was referred to as 'the Reparation noble', suggesting that it was seen as a contribution towards repairs of the almshouse. In another example, the 1587 rules for the Drapers' Company almshouses in Shrewsbury included the stipulation that, on admission, almspeople should bring with them a shroud with 4d. tied in a corner, presumably as their contribution towards their (eventual) burial.[133]

The residents of Maynard and Cotton's, chosen by the mayor, and those of St John's, nominated by the Archbishop of Canterbury, were likely to have been drawn from better off inhabitants of the city, for whom paying a noble on admission would not have presented any difficulty. One of the brethren admitted to the Maynard and Cotton almshouse by the mayor George Miller in 1661/2, was referred to as 'James Masters Gent, some time Alderman of the city'.[134] From a comparison with Hearth Tax listings of the few admissions to this almshouse in the 1660s and 1670s, the impression is that the economic status of almspeople was similar to Jesus Hospital, where occupants were also chosen by the mayor. Two surnames of almspeople appear in the hearth tax assessments, both chargeable on two hearth houses; and Daniell Wakeley, chosen as 'prior' (warden) in 1668 had

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[132] CCA U13/2 St John's Hospital Admissions Book.
[133] Sylvia Watts, *Shropshire Almshouses*, p. 101.
[134] CCA S/8/1 Maynard and Cotton Almshouses Accounts 1599 - 1653 and Admissions 1630 - 1795.

previously been chargeable on a three hearth house in Newingate Ward in the city.[135]

It is not clear that occupants of other almshouses would have been as well off as these almspeople, even in places where 6s. 8d. was chargeable on admission. For instance at Stratford-upon-Avon, where the 6s. 8d. entry fee continued to be paid throughout the sixteenth century, the surviving probate material from two sixteenth-century almshouse residents does not suggest great wealth. Thomas Patrick, a tailor, and his wife Joan entered the almshouses in 1582. They had owned their own house, and when Joan died in 1597 her inventory was worth £4 12s. But John Ashwell, who entered the almshouses the following year and died shortly after, was a wheelwright, and at his death his possessions were valued at only 18s. 10d. He left his working tools to his son Thomas, and 12d. to each of his other three children. His widow had not entered the almshouse with him, perhaps because they could not afford to pay two entry fees.[136] It is not often that almspeople left wills; the few identified show considerable variation, but relatively modest possessions. Richard Hargrave, a husbandman who died in the Stoneleigh almshouses in Warwickshire in 1640, had assets worth £47 15s. 8d., but debts owed to him made up £43 of this. His actual possessions were fairly typical of a poor householder. They included a 'joyned bed'; an 'olde bedsted' and 'woolbedde' with a pillow, two blankets and two pairs of sheets; two 'Little kettle', four 'little stooles', an 'Old lanthorne' and a 'Forke'.[137] Dorothy Clarke, an almswoman at Temple Balsall Hospital in Warwickshire,

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[135] Harrington, Pearson & Rose, *Kent Hearth Tax*, p. 442.
[136] Jones, *Inventories*, pp. 55, 171.
[137] N.W. Alcock, *People at Home. Living in a Warwickshire Village, 1500 – 1800* (Chichester, 1993), p. 143.

subscribed her will with her mark in 1729. Her inventory has not survived, but she left one shilling to her brother and the rest of her possessions to her kinsman and executor Thomas Harris, who was a labourer. In contrast Bridget Phipps, spinster and one of the first almswomen admitted to Temple Balsall , left possessions valued at £34 1s. 2d. in 1713. Her bequests included one guinea to her cousin, a Dr. William Phipps.[138]

It might have been the intention of an almshouse founder to benefit the very poor, but after their death the actual disposition of places was in the hands of trustees with possibly differing priorities. Lady Katherine Leveson, for example, in designing her almshouse at Temple Balsall, had specified that her almspeople were to be chosen 'out of the poor inhabitants' of Balsall, and 'in the choyce of the said poore persons the poorest persons and such as be lame and in greatest distress shall be ever preferred'. Only if there were insufficient applicants from Balsall were women to be admitted from elsewhere.[139] Yet in a complicated lawsuit in Chancery in 1685, one of the complaints made was that poor widows were being brought out of other parishes, given a settlement for a short time in Balsall, and then admitted to the almshouse, 'while severall poore widows ancient inhabitants of the said parish of Balsall … are kept out'.[140] At least two of the almswomen leaving wills in the early eighteenth century appear to have been personal servants, one of the master of the hospital and the other of Lady Leveson's steward, who acted as principal trustee. It may be that the trustees were using their

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[138] WRO CR112/Ba45; CR112/BA65/47.
[139] WRO CR1540/6 Transcript of Lady Katherine Leveson's will.
[140] WRO DR18/15/3 Temple Balsall lawsuit by the overseers of the poor regarding the administration of the hospital, 1685 – 1700. Petition to Lord Guildford 20 July 1685 p. 62.

powers to provide for their own dependents rather than Lady Katherine's intended beneficiaries, prompting the parishioners' complaint.[141]

While some of these examples show that many almspeople could be considered amongst the better off sections of society, other evidence exists to show that some almspeople were undoubtedly poor. The six inhabitants of Oken's almshouses at the time of the great fire of Warwick in 1694 were simply described as 'poore' in the official estimates of the fire losses. Elizabeth Dyer, Sarah Cooper and Anne Dunne each lost goods worth just over £1, representing their meagre household goods, bedding, bedclothes and wearing clothes. William Pestell, lodging in the almshouse with his mother Mary, lost linen and woollen cloth worth £3 3s. Widow Mary Bolton claimed a slightly more substantial loss of £6 10s. worth in 'bedsteds, beding, linen, woollen, brass, household goods and fewel'. Comparison with fire losses sustained by other citizens of Warwick indicate just how poor were Oken's almspeople, with only live-in servants such as Elizabeth Pain and Mary Carter having possessions of as little value as the three almswomen, Elizabeth, Sarah and Anne.[142] The trustees of Hawkins' Hospital began to provide a burial grant of 17s. 6d. in 1719, presumably because many of the almsmen, existing only on their stipends with no additional resources, were unable to meet these costs themselves. Prior to this, the Minute Books show that five shillings had been expended on John Wardell's burial in 1639, he 'having noe meanes left to bury himself'; and in 1684 George Oliver had

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[141] WRO CR112/Ba47/1 Will of Lucie Leek Nov.3rd 1718; CR112/Ba52/1 Will of Joan Miles 14th August 1726.
[142] Michael Farr (ed.), 'The Great Fire of Warwick 1694', *Dugdale Society,* Vol. XXXVI (1992), pp. 175, 203-4, 238.

been described as 'an Almes man so poor yt he left nothing to bury him'.[143]

The admission criteria for the Kent almshouses with which William Lambarde was involved specified that applicants should have been relieved by the parish for three years prior to admission. Applicants had to be nominated by the parish officers, and it seems safe to assume that parishes would have complied with this restriction, as it was in their interests to place in these almshouses parishioners who were proving a burden on the rates. At New Cobham College, for example, although parishes were supposed to give the almshouse a bond of £20 to ensure that no-one 'unmeet' was admitted, by the early eighteenth century there were complaints that parishes were getting rid of their most disreputable residents in this way.[144]

There is also evidence from a number of other almshouses that applicants were dependent or partially dependent on parish poor relief before admission, and, in the poorest almshouses, retained that dependency even after admission. Anne Davison, for instance, one of Sir John Duck's original almswomen from Chester-le-Street, County Durham, appears in the overseers' accounts as receiving poor relief in 1666, 1675, 1684 and 1685, prior to her admission to the almshouse in 1686.[145] She was described as blind, and, like the other almswomen, is recorded as a widow in the 1686 list of inmates.[146] She also appears in the Hearth Tax records as exempt in 1673, as does another of Duck's first occupants, widow Barbara Robinson.[147] Six others of the original twelve almspeople share surnames with people

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[143] MALSC CH108/2 Hawkins Hospital Minute Book 1617 – 1691, p. 124; CH108/115/41 Loose accounts 30 May 1684.
[144] Arnold, *Cobham College,* p. 21.
[145] DRO EP/CS 4/92 and 4/93, Churchwardens and Overseers Account Books, 1606 - 1666 (three volumes) and 1670 - 1702.
[146] DULSC MSP 25 f. 135r. Foundation indenture of the Hospital of Sir John Duck, Baronet, at Lumley.
[147] Green, Parkinson, Spufford (eds), *Durham Hearth Tax*, pp. 251, 265.

listed as exempt, and one person shares a surname with someone paying on a one-hearth house.[148] This suggests that most if not all of Duck's original almspeople were from genuinely poor families. It is occasionally possible to trace other almshouse occupants being helped through parish poor relief before admission to an almshouse, such as widow Margaret Sharpe who entered Sir Roger Manwood's hospital in Hackington, Kent, in 1595. She appears as Mother Sharpe in the accounts of the churchwardens of St Stephens, Hackington, receiving a load and a half of wood and five shillings in 1593, and another load of wood in 1594.[149] Marjorie McIntosh also gives a number of examples of residents in the almshouses at Hadleigh, Suffolk, in 1594 who had received parish relief before they were admitted to one of the town almshouses.[150]

Examples of parish paupers being admitted as almspeople continue throughout the period, for instance in seventeenth-century Leamington Hastings, Warwickshire (see the case study in chapter 6). In 1719 the overseers of East Farleigh in Kent, who had been providing Widow Baldock with regular relief of one or two shillings, paid three shillings 'for carrying Widd Bauldock 'and her housall goods to the Almes house'.[151] Widow Ann Austin, one of the first inhabitants of Sir Thomas Dunk's almshouse in Hawkhurst, Kent, had previously been on regular poor relief. From 1720 until her admission to the almshouse she had her rent of fifteen shillings a year paid by the parish, and regular relief of four shillings a month. Another

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[148] Ibid., pp. 77-8, 168, 251-2, 263-51.
[149] CCA CC-S/7/1 St Stephen's Hospital Memorandum and Disbursements Book, 1593 - 1828; CCA U3/39/28/13 Hackington Churchwardens' Accounts 1588 - 1601 (typed transcripts).
[150] For example, Agnes Berwell and Ketherine Debenham. McIntosh, *Poor Relief in Hadleigh*, pp. 175-6.
[151] CKS P142/12/1 East Farleigh Overseers' Accounts 1715 – 1751.

widow, Elizabeth Stunt, admitted in 1730, was having her rent paid from the commencement of the overseers account book in 1711; she also received half a cord of wood and half a cord of faggots, and occasional relief of two shillings a month.[152] Apart from Ann Austin, three more of the original six inhabitants of Dunk's almshouses, had previously received payouts from Thomas Iddenden's Charity, administered by the Hawkhurst churchwardens.[153] John Evans, who was admitted to the almshouse in 1727, dying the following year, was never in receipt of poor relief, but was probably on the margins of poverty. He was assessed to pay poor rates, but by 1723 this was at the insignificant amount of thirteen and a half pence for the half year. He was a shoemaker, regularly paid by the overseers to repair poor people's shoes, and in 1720 he had a poor man, John Reynolds, boarded out with him for a year.[154]

These examples demonstrate the diversity in the economic circumstances of almshouse residents before admission. It may well be that in this diversity they were not so very different from other recipients of relief and charity in early modern communities. The parish of St Mary's, Gateshead, for instance, paid 5s. 6d. in 1684 towards the burial of Mr Whitehead, a schoolmaster.[155] It seems that people from very different economic backgrounds could end up in old age needing the support of the parish. This can be seen, for example, in the inventories of goods assigned to the parish by parish paupers. The overseers of Leigh in Kent supported John Hayselden with lodging and food at the end of his life in 1661/2, and

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[152] CKS Ch147/A2 Thomas Dunk's Charity Register; CKS P178/11/1 Hawkhurst Overseers' Poor Book 1711 – 1726.
[153] CKS Ch153/F1 Thomas Iddenden's Charity Accounts.
[154] CKS P178/11/1 Hawkhurst Overseers' Poor Book 1711 - 1726.
[155] DRO EP/Ga.SM 5/1 Gateshead St Mary's Vestry Meetings 1681 – 1807.

paid for his funeral. In return they received a meagre 14s. 6d. for his 'apparell'. After the death of Widow Child in 1680, the overseers of Ipsley in Warwickshire received just £1 6s. 2d. for her goods.[156] Yet Dorothy Harding's goods, sold in 1687 to the overseers of West Malling in Kent, were worth £6 and included chairs, beds, dishes, chests of drawers, curtains, rugs, feather beds and bolsters, and she was able to sign her own name.[157] Joseph Gillham of Chatham owned two houses, but still needed parish support in 1724. The vestry minutes of Chatham St Mary's record that the parish officers were ordered to take into custody his two houses and put the rent towards the maintenance of Gillham and his wife.[158] The town of Maidstone received £22 1s. 8d., a considerable sum, from the goods of a Widow Ward who had died leaving three children to the care of the town of Maidstone in 1673, in recompense for the money spent on nursing and burying her and the care of the children.[159] In a poignant example of how families' fortunes could change and parish support be required, widower John Bodkins was apparently an independent smallholder, contributing to the poor rate in New Romney, when he died in 1669 leaving two young children to the care of the parish. The overseers took his goods, valued at £14 9s. 10d., rented out his house, and sold his two horses and his apple crop. In return they maintained the children. Mary was apprenticed in 1674; her little brother John died in 1678, by now a 'poore boy', orphaned and disinherited.[160]

This sort of personal catastrophe was all too common in early modern England. Contemporaries were acutely aware of the precariousness of life;

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[156] WRO CR1741/28 Ipsley Overseers' Accounts 1661 – 1730.
[157] CKS P223/5/1 Leigh Churchwardens' and Overseers' Accounts, 1631 – 1683; CKS P243/18/164.
[158] MALSC P85/8/2 Chatham St Mary's Vestry Minutes 1715 – 1739.
[159] CKS P241/11/1 Maidstone Poor Book 1668 – 1677.
[160] CKS P309/11/1 New Romney Overseers' Accounts, 1653 – 1710.

how people could work to secure economic independence for themselves and their families, and yet be so rapidly overtaken by misfortune. As a result, many almshouse founders emphasised that the beneficiaries of their endowments should be people who had previously worked to support themselves, and been reduced to want through no fault of their own. This has sometimes been interpreted as a desire to benefit only the 'deserving' poor, and exclude the profligate and idle. While this was no doubt an important factor, the emphasis might actually have been more inclusive than this would suggest, recognising and sympathising with the predicaments of a wide range of people who might require help.

However, there is a definite suggestion of more discrimination in the allocation of almshouse places as the period progressed. By Dunk's will, his almshouses at Hawkhurst had been intended as 'plain and useful habitations' for 'decayed housekeepers' of the parish, and the first almspeople would appear to fit that description.[161] They seem to have been a relatively diverse group, as were the occupants of the Leamington Hastings almshouse (see chapter 6). There is some suggestion, however, that, as with admissions to the Leamington Hastings almshouse in the early eighteenth century, access to Dunk's almshouse soon became more restricted. William Turley, churchwarden in 1722 and one of the guardians of the new workhouse built in 1726, was admitted to the almshouse in 1734.[162] Meanwhile, in contrast, the poor man John Reynolds (mentioned above), had to petition the justices for relief in 1723, and in 1726 he was forced to enter

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[161] CKS Ch147/A10 Copy of will of Sir Thomas Dunk.
[162] CKS P178/5/9 Hawkhurst Churchwardens' Accounts 1717 - 1759.

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the newly built workhouse.[163] There was no possibility of a place in the almshouse for him. By the early eighteenth century almshouse founders also appear to have become more discriminatory, sometimes explicitly excluding from admission those on poor relief, as did Thomas Harris, for example, who founded his almshouse in Canterbury by will in 1719. He specified that each applicant had to produce a certificate from the parish officers, vouching that they had settlement in the parish, were aged over 50, and were not receiving parish poor relief.[164] The numbers of people who were genuinely poor in early modern England were much greater than the minority who received parish poor relief, so this stipulation does not imply that Harris's almspeople would necessarily have come from amongst the better-off. It does suggest, however, the introduction of a new element of discrimination, whereby the occupants of an almshouse came to be seen as a different category of poor from the recipients of parish poor relief, despite the many similarities there might once have been between them.

Rules of behaviour

Some almshouses had rules of behaviour for their almspeople, but the majority did not. For instance, in county Durham, there are only three early modern almshouses with extant rules.[165] In Warwickshire the number is similarly small, only six, although there may have been more which have not survived.[166] While some of the archaic rules governing occupants' behaviour

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[163] CKS P178/13/315 warrant 1723; CKS P178/13/316 order 1726.
[164] HCPP no. 30 (1837), p. 267.
[165] The three were Sherburn Hospital, which had several sets of rules made at different times by Bishops of Durham; the rules for his Palace Green almshouses laid down by John Cosin, Bishop of Durham; and those set down by William Hutchinson for his almshouse at Romaldkirk.
[166] Three of those with extant rules are the foundations of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester; his granddaughter Lady Katherine Leveson; and Sir Thomas Holte of Aston Hall. The others are Ford's Hospital and West Orchard almshouses, administered by Coventry corporation,

may dismay modern readers, these rules are often formulaic, seemingly copied from earlier examples of almshouse statutes.[167] In many respects, moreover, they were no different from contemporary expectations of the conduct of the poor in general, particularly those in positions of economic dependence. For instance, a disabled soldier in 1660 had the pension of 40s. a year awarded him by the Durham quarter sessions made conditional on his good behaviour: he was to receive it 'soe long as [he] doth well demeane himselfe'.[168] The majority of almshouses did not have explicit rules laid down; those that did were mostly the better endowed institutions. Examples include the lengthy ordinances for the Lord Leycester Hospital, drawn up by Robert Dudley in 1585; the series of regulations devised by William Lambarde for the almshouses with which he was involved in Kent; and the simple instructions for the Palace Green almshouses in Durham set out by John Cosin, Bishop of Durham, in 1668.[169] As Goodall helpfully emphasises in discussing the complex set of fifteenth-century rules for God's House at Ewelme, these rules should not be read as a description of day-to-life. Rather, they were the contract between the patron and the almshouse community, between the donor and the recipients of his charity, setting out what was expected from the almsmen in return for their place.[170] In the case of the almsmen of Ewelme, for instance, their main duty was to pray for the souls of the living and the dead, for the founders and their ancestors, the King and all Christian people.

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and James Gramer's almshouse at Mancetter. Eyffler's almshouse may once have had rules, as there is a reference to orders 'in the book of the said house', but this has not survived. WRO CR1618/WA12/33/7.

[167] See, for instance, the discussion of the Ewelme statutes and comparison with other fifteenth-century examples in Richmond's 'Victorian values'.

[168] DRO Q/S/OB5 p. 72.

[169] Tibbits, 'Hospital'; Warnicke, *William Lambarde,* pp. 45-7; DULSC MS/91 f. 170.

[170] Goodall, *God's House*, p. 213.

Most early modern almshouses with formal rules also specified prayers and attendance at church. Robert Dudley, for instance, ordered that his almsmen were to attend prayers daily in the former guild chapel over the West Gate in Warwick which had been appropriated to the almshouse. On Sundays and holy days they were to process in their gowns to the parish church of St Mary's, where their allocated seats towards the front of the central nave were a mark of their high status.[171] William Hutchinson, in his will of 1693, appointed the parish clerk as custos of his almshouse in Romaldkirk, and required him to read prayers on Wednesdays and Fridays, and see that the almspeople attended the parish church on Sundays.[172] Bishop Cosin's almspeople had to attend Durham Cathedral twice a day, for the morning and evening services. They were also expected to pray privately on their knees in their chambers on rising and going to bed, Cosin specifying the Lord's Prayer and the second and third collects from the services of Morning and Evening Prayer for their private devotions. These prayers were to be displayed on the wall in their rooms for their daily use. The rest of their time they were expected to spend in their rooms, not to indulge in carding or dicing, and allow no tippling or gaming in their chambers.[173] This exceedingly dull life must have been the nearest equivalent to monasticism in seventeenth-century Protestant England; yet a resolutely Anglican bishop considered it the ideal model for his poor almspeople.[174] We have no means

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[171] WRO CR1600/31 The House Book, April 10th 1664, records the agreement with the churchwardens of St Mary's: the Lord Leycester Brethren 'were settled in two seates in ye middle Isle being the 4th and 5th formes'.

[172] DRO EP/Rom 12/2 Copy of William Hutchinson's will, in Regulations for the management of the Bowes and Romaldkirk Charities.

[173] DULSC MS/91 f. 170.

[174] While in exile on the continent during the Commonwealth, Cosin had resisted attempts to convert him to Catholicism, despite his son John and many other English exiles becoming

of knowing how far Bishop Cosin's rule was obeyed, but if the conduct of other cathedral appointees at Durham was typical, it probably remained an unattained ideal. For instance, the cathedral organist Richard Hutchinson was admonished in 1628 for breaking the head of one of the singing men with a candlestick in an alehouse, 'wounding him verie dangerously'.[175] The cathedral bedesmen, who were poor men appointed by the crown charged with keeping the cathedral clean and assisting at services, seem to have been very lax in undertaking their duties. Many of them appear to have been absent from Durham, possibly having sold their pensions to others, and with one even continuing to claim his allowance from prison in Rochester.[176]

The evidence from other almshouses suggests that not all almspeople embraced a life of prayer enthusiastically. Sir John Boys' Jesus Hospital in Canterbury had its own chapel, where the almspeople were supposed to attend daily for prayers, but attendance appears to have been somewhat reluctant. Boys issued revised ordinances in 1599, expressing his chagrin that, despite the Brothers and Sisters living 'at the chapel door', they often did not arrive until the prayers were almost over. Henceforth, he ordered that if they were late, they were to be fined as if they had been absent.[177] The requirements at Hawkins' Hospital were less onerous. There was no chapel, and the almspeople only had to attend church on Sundays and holy days.

Catholics. Anthony Milton, 'Cosin, John (1595–1672)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6372 (accessed 2 Dec 2013).

[175] Durham Cathedral Library, Add MS 375/1 Transcription (1898) of Chapter Act Book Vol. I, 1578 – 1726.

[176] DULSC DCD/L/BB/51 Treasurer's Book no. 51, 1710/1 – 1728/9, f. 163v. The 1595 rules at Sherburn Hospital specifically forbade the selling of pensions, suggesting it was a known practice (although, interestingly, this prohibition was not included in the new rules of 1735). Allan, *Collectanea Dunelmensis*, p. 230.

[177] CCA U204/R2 Copy of revised ordinances in the back of Jesus Hospital Register Book 1727 – 1844.

But the almsmen were expected to learn by heart a set of prayers, and be tested on them by the minister of the parish once a quarter.[178] Anyone who could not manage to say them after three months was to be expelled, unless they did not have the use of their tongue, or unless extreme old age (80 or more) made anyone 'of soe bad memory that he may not carry the same prayers in mynd', which suggests that Hawkins (or Lambarde) was realistic about the likely capabilities of aged and illiterate seamen.[179] At Hawkins' Hospital a Bible in English 'of the allowed translation' and a Book of Common Prayer were also to be in a 'convenient place' for the use of the almsfolk. The governors went further at their meeting on 6th April 1648. 'Taking into consideracon the great want of the Almesffolkes as to instrucon in the ways of God', they asked the minister of Chatham to visit weekly.[180] In 1674 they suspended Widow Man from her place for refusing to go to divine service. She, however, petitioned the governors, arguing that the rules only imposed fines rather than suspension for this offence, which fines were supposed to be distributed amongst the other almsfolk. She asked for the suspension to be withdrawn, and in her petition 'humble desires to submit to such forfeiture as often as she breaks ye sd Institution'.[181] In other words, she had no intention of conforming, but seems to have been prepared to pay the fines as a tax on her nonconformity.

The purpose of all this prayer was not ostensibly, as in pre-Reformation Ewelme, to benefit the founder's soul, although some early

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[178] Possibly the same prayers written by William Lambarde for his own Queen Elizabeth College, and approved by the Bishop of Rochester: Warnicke, *William Lambarde*, p. 46.

[179] MALSC CH108/21 Minute Book 1617 – 1691. This requirement is similar to that of the fifteenth-century St. John's Hospital in Heytesbury, Wiltshire, where those who could not read had to learn the prayers by heart and be tested on them quarterly. Richmond, 'Victorian values', p. 231.

[180] MALSC, CH108/21 Minute Book 1617 – 1691, p. 169.

[181] Ibid., p.228; MALSC CH 108/36 Petition by Susanna Mann.

modern founders of almshouses seem to have hoped to benefit from the prayers of their beneficiaries. Thomas Oken, who died in 1573 and whose memorial in St Mary's Warwick appears to have originally asked for prayers for his soul, requested his almspeople to pray daily for the Queen, the good estate of the town of Warwick, and to praise God for the souls of him and his wife Joan.[182] The Protestant Lady Katherine Leveson ensured that she was remembered daily as 'our renowned Benefactress' by writing the prayer for her almswomen herself before her death in 1674.[183] The emphasis on prayer, however, was also a means of promoting godliness as well as gratitude in the hearts of the almspeople, which in itself would mark them out as fit recipients of charity. Promoting godliness in old age, moreover, for those approaching death and the last judgement, may have been seen as especially important, as vital as instilling godliness in young people in preparation for their adult lives. Thomas Delavel, the Commonwealth magistrate, on rediscovering Bernard Gilpin's intention that there should be three poor men attached to the Kepier Free Grammar School and Almshouse in County Durham, not only appointed the poor men in 1658 but devised a form of agreement for their appointment. Each 'poor almsbody' was to attend divine service twice on Sundays, and 'spend the short remaining part of his dayes religiously, peaceably, and unblameably'.[184] This is a similar aspiration to that expressed in the Ewelme statutes that the rules were devised 'to the increase of virtue in the inhabitants'.[185] This suggests an ideal model for a pious old age.

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[182] WRO CR2758/1 Oken's Charity Accounts 1574 – 1596.
[183] WRO DRB36/5 Register book 1678 – 1890, Vol. 1.
[184] DRO EP/Ho 613 Thomas Delavel's Notebook.
[185] Statute LXXXI, Goodall, p. 251.

Many founders specified in their rules that almspeople were to live peaceably and cleanly, and to refrain from swearing, drinking, and fornication. For instance, the lengthy set of ordinances drawn up for the Lord Leycester Hospital in 1585 forbade physical violence, specified expulsion for the offences of adultery and fornication, and required each brother to 'keep his Chamber sweete without wilfull anoyenge any of his Bretheren in any fylthie or unseemelye maner.' They also included such rules as not keeping 'Dogge or Hawke', using no 'unlawfull Game', and not 'unlawfullie breakinge anye hedge' nor 'cuttinge or carryenge awaye any Wood'.[186] In contrast, the Earl of Leicester's granddaughter, Lady Katherine Leveson, left fairly simple instructions for the behaviour of her almswomen at Temple Balsall. They were to be widows or unmarried, 'of good lives and conversations'; they were at all times to wear the provided gowns of grey cloth with the letters KL in blue; and to have the benefit of their place and annual stipend for their respective lives, unless they were removed by the trustees 'for their miscarriage (and demeanour)'.[187] Gratitude and deference to their benefactors were expected of almspeople, for instance by accepting the distinctive livery. Sometimes this was made even more explicit; for instance the poor almsmen at Hawkins' Hospital had to present themselves at the gate of the almshouse, humbly and with 'some words of prayer for their health and prosperitie' if any of the four most important trustees should pass by.[188] At New Cobham College, all the able poor were expected to present themselves at Cobham Hall on the second Sunday of every quarter, if Lord

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[186] WRO CR1600/2 Founder's Statutes Nos. 13, 20, 21, 23, 27, 29.
[187] WRO CR1540/6 Transcript of Lady Katherine's will.
[188] MALSC CH108/21 Minute Book 1617 – 1691, Hawkins' Hospital statutes.

and Lady Cobham were at home, 'in thankfull manner for theire mainetance'.[189]

Penalties for misdemeanours were usually fines, or the stopping of the almsperson's allowance, with expulsion for repeat offenders. It is not easy to find evidence of fines being levied for breach of the rules, however, and expulsions were rare. John Black of Jesus Hospital, Canterbury, was fined 'accordinge to the statute' in 1620 and 1621 'for his perditions', but what these were is not specified. The fines appear to have had the desired effect, as he received his full allowance in 1622.[190] In another rare example, John Vaughn of Christ's Hospital, Abingdon, 'was restored to his full wages' in 1608 after being fined three weeks' pay for 'misbehaving himself' towards the governors and fellow residents. Earlier in the year he had been admonished, but not fined, for being 'a man very turbulent, a brawler and a fighter'.[191] Only three men appear to have been expelled from the Lord Leycester Hospital during the whole of the seventeenth century. All of these were in the 1650s, possibly suggesting a tightening of the rules at that time. Two were for prolonged absences of several years from the hospital, suggesting these might have been almsmen who had been inappropriately admitted, or who had other resources. The third was 'deprived for drunkenness, misdemeanours and marrying without the consent of the Master'.[192] How hard it was to deprive an almsperson of their place is shown by two examples from Bond's Hospital, Coventry. Henry Leech was expelled in 1611 after many complaints of 'his misdemeanour against his fellows', and

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[189] MALSC P336/5/1 Shorne Churchwardens' Accounts 1630 – 1681, abstract of rules relating to Cobham College.
[190] CCA U204/F1/1 Jesus Hospital Ledger 1610 - 1637.
[191] John Carter & Jacqueline Smith, *Give and Take. Scenes from the History of Christ's Hospital, Abingdon. 1553 – 1900* (Abingdon, 1981), p. 53.
[192] WRO CR1741/57 Philip Styles' notebook, p. 46.

the corporation ordered that 'an other of better manners' should be admitted in his place.[193] But he was mentioned again in 1615, when his allowance was stopped and he was 'putt forth' from the place for 'many misdemeanours' which had been documented over a period of time, and which 'conclude him a man unfitt for that place'.[194] John Eden was expelled in 1666 for his 'debauchedness, fighting, quarrelling', but was allowed to stay until a place at the neighbouring Ford's Hospital became vacant. He was still at Bond's the following year, when he was again expelled for 'disquietness and ill carriage'. Yet the Corporation minutes record his death in the almshouse in 1678.[195]

It is possible that these expulsions were only temporary, and Henry Leech and John Eden had been readmitted after short absences. John Griffin was suspended from his place in Hawkins' Hospital, Chatham, in April 1622 for behaving obstinately and disobediently towards the Deputy Governor, 'unquietlie' amongst his fellows, and even being 'very peremptorily behaved' towards the governors. A week later the Deputy Governor reported that he 'dothe humblie intreate forgivenes for all his former abuses both in the howse and towards those unto whome he oweth both obeidnce reverence & duty'. He promised to give no future cause for complaint 'but will bee a true convert', and the governors agreed to allow him back in.[196] They were particularly concerned for the 'miserable condicon' of his poor wife, to whom several additional payments had been made for surgery and salve for her leg.[197] However, in August that year he was expelled again, with another almsman Robert Wilson, for having 'clamorously' petitioned the Archbishop

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[193] CHC BA/H/3/17/1 Council Minute Book 1557 – 1640, p. 188.
[194] Ibid., p. 205v.
[195] Orton & Cleary, *So long as the world*, p. 49-50.
[196] MALSC CH108/21 Hawkins' Hospital Minute Book 1617 – 1691.
[197] MALSC CH108/135 Deputy Governor's accounts 1621 - 2.

of Canterbury, on behalf of all the almsfolk, about the government of the hospital. The governors regarded Wilson as the ring-leader. Although they described him as being 'of a factious and contentious disposition', he was readmitted 'on his humble petition' five days later.[198] Although the Griffins were not reinstated, the governors appear to have retained some sympathy for them, or at least for Griffin's poor wife, and in May 1623 paid 10s. to John Lasey's wife for the care she had given them, including 'in the tyme of their sickness after their expulsion'.[199]

It seems that despite the strictures in the rules, these were not necessarily applied rigorously, and in practice it seems that it was extremely difficult to deprive an almsperson of their place once it had been awarded. This might have been because there was nowhere else practically for the person to go; but there also seems to have been a widely accepted view that the award of an almshouse place was for life, similar to an annuity. The existence of official rules, constituting a contract as in Goodall's suggestion, was thus a necessary counterbalance to the almsperson's rights, giving trustees and governors the power to act if they needed to do so. Rules were consequently more in evidence in the wealthier establishments where the award of an almshouse place constituted a particularly valuable resource. This had the paradoxical effect of making the inhabitants of higher status almshouses more likely to be subjected to rules governing their behaviour, and to be more rigorously controlled in their day to day activities.

This is shown most clearly perhaps at Morden College, Blackheath, founded by Sir John Morden in 1695 for 'decayed Turkey merchants', that is,

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[198] MALSC CH108/21 Hawkins' Hospital Minute Book 1617 - 1691.
[199] MALSC CH108/137 Deputy Governor's accounts 1623-4.

those who had been engaged in overseas trade with the east. According to Morden's wishes his college was run by trustees from the Levant (or Turkey) Company (and after its demise by the East India Company). The building, a grand quadrangle, is believed to have been designed by Wren; the forty-four almsmen, who were to be widowed or unmarried, were provided with a sitting room and bedroom each, a generous allowance, and resident servants to look after their needs. Morden built the college in his lifetime, and his charity was designed to enable the almsmen to live as gentlemen, despite their reduced circumstances: 'The provision made for College members was a badge of their status as once men of worth and now gentlemen of a sort again'.[200] Yet the rules could not have been more irksome to men who had previously run their own businesses and occupied a respected position in society. They had to attend service in the chapel twice a day in their gowns, receive holy communion four times a year, and attend evening lectures or 'expositions'. A resident chaplain and treasurer were responsible for their day to day supervision, under the direction of the trustees. The almsmen were to 'employ themselves in acts of piety and devotion', 'demean themselves civilly', and not 'intermeddle with the business of the college'.[201] Swearing, drunkenness and quarrelling could lead to immediate expulsion, although drunkenness seems to have been quite common. The gates were locked at nine in the summer and eight in the winter, and the men could not be absent from the college for more than twenty-four hours. Hardly surprisingly, there

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[200] Joyce, *Patronage and Poverty*, p. 49.
[201] Ibid., pp. 46, 50.

seems to have been a 'powerful current of disorder, disobedience and resistance' running through the college's history.[202]

Other high status almshouses provide similar evidence of disorderly behaviour, for instance the many examples from the London Charterhouse, which suggests that the attempt to impose discipline upon residents had only limited success.[203] Joseph Stanley, for example, an occupant of the Geffrye almshouses in Shoreditch run by the Ironmongers' Company (founded in 1712), had to appear before the Company Court in 1721 charged with being drunk and helping another almsman, also drunk, over the almshouse wall at an unreasonable time of night, and then leaving his companion on the ground all night so that he died soon after.[204] One suspects that climbing over the almshouse wall after the gates had been locked at night was probably a regular occurrence, and Stanley was only apprehended in this instance because of the fatal accident. At the Geffrye almshouses there was a resident chaplain responsible for the good behaviour of the almsmen, but in 1729 even he was dismissed for rudeness and misbehaviour, including throwing a cushion over a desk and refusing to read prayers.[205] Stephen Porter ascribes this sort of disorder at early modern almshouses to the common standards of behaviour of the times, which were in contrast with the unrealistic expectations of founders and governors attempting to establish model communities. He also blames the poor selection of residents and staff, as a result of patronage and corruption.[206]

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[202] Ibid., p. 54.
[203] Stephen Porter, 'Order and disorder in the early modern almshouse: the Charterhouse example', *The London Journal,* vol. 23, no. 1 (1998), pp. 1-14.
[204] Burton, *Geffrye Almshouses,* p. 37.
[205] Ibid., p. 55.
[206] Porter, 'Order and disorder', p. 13.

Interesting as these anecdotes are, however, they should not be given undue emphasis. The great majority of almshouse residents left no mark in official records of any kind, and may have been duly grateful for their good fortune and of exemplary behaviour. It is possible that a lifetime of deference and subjection to authority through economic dependence better prepared the genuinely poor than those of higher status for the intrusive supervision of masters, chaplains, trustees and members of the corporation, which residence in an almshouse could entail. Moreover, most almshouses did not have the mechanisms for onsite supervision and surveillance employed by wealthier establishments. Many of the surviving pre-Reformation almshouses and hospitals had a Master, such as the Durham hospitals of Greatham and Sherburn, who was usually an ordained minister, responsible for the governing of the almshouse and supervision of the almspeople. This traditional form was adopted by a small number of wealthier establishments in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, such as the Earl of Leicester's hospital at Warwick (1571), and the Earl of Northampton's Trinity Hospital, Greenwich (1613). The Master was not necessarily resident, however, and many posts were treated by their incumbents as valuable sinecures, often combined with other valuable livings. The Bishops of Durham, for instance, appear to have regarded the masterships of Greatham and Sherburn as useful posts with which to reward their protégés.[207]

In poorer establishments which could not afford to fund the salary of a master, such as the Hospital of St Edmund King and Martyr and King James

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[207] Anthony Bellasis, for example, was Master of both Sherburn Hospital and St Edmund's Hospital in Gateshead in the sixteenth century; Allan (1771), p. 88. Bishop John Cosin himself had been Master of Greatham Hospital for a short time in 1624 while chaplain to Bishop Neile, succeeding the bishop's brother in the post; Ornsby, 'Correspondence Part I', p. 21.

at Gateshead, the master was also the rector of the parish. Elsewhere local officials took on this role. At Dover the town mayor acted as the master of the Seamen's Hospital, and Sir Roger Manwood appointed the parish clerk of Hackington to act as warden of his almshouses. In almshouses which were joint foundations with a school, as at Lawrence Sherriff's foundation at Rugby and Lady Katherine Leveson's at Temple Balsall, it was usual for the master of the school to combine the supervision of the two establishments. At Hawkins' Hospital one of the trustees, usually a naval captain living nearby, was appointed Deputy Governor to manage the hospital's day to day affairs. Elsewhere there might be a prefectorial system in place, by which one or two of the almspeople would be appointed or elected to supervise the rest. For instance, at Lambarde's Queen Elizabeth Hospital and at Trinity Hospital Aylesford, one of the almspeople was appointed to act as warden. At the Lord Leycester Hospital, while the Master had responsibility for such things as letting leases of the hospital's lands, two of the senior almsmen were appointed as stewards, and they conducted the day-to-day business of the hospital, paying bills and keeping accounts.[208] These 'senior' almspeople might also have had the task of reporting on the conduct of their fellows to the governors at their official meetings, as did paid employees such as the chaplains at Morden and Bromley Colleges. At New Cobham College, an 'honest man' was to have 5s. a year in return for informing the paymaster of any disorders amongst the poor in the College.[209] This responsibility for peer surveillance, unpleasant though it sounds, was no different from that

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[208] See, for instance, WRO CR1600/31 The House Book, containing the elections and accounts of the stewards.

[209] MALSC P336/5/1 Shorne Churchwardens' Accounts 1630 – 1681, abstract of rules relating to Cobham College. Similarly, at Ewelme one of the poor men was appointed to report on the behaviour of the others. Richmond, 'Victorian values', p. 226.

undertaken by, for instance, churchwardens in the parishes, and should be seen in this context. While one might have expected that the rewards for snooping and reporting to officialdom would have led to bad feeling amongst the occupants of an almshouse, the scant evidence of fines and expulsions suggests that, as in the parishes, turning a blind eye in the interests of solidarity and good neighbourliness commonly led to the response 'all well' to the enquiries of officialdom.[210]

For the majority of almshouses with no onsite or official supervision, this responsibility would have fallen on the minister and parish officials in the normal exercise of their authority and moral oversight. This can be seen, for instance, in the example of Rev. William Binckes' intervention in Jane Mann's expulsion from the Leamington Hastings almshouse (see chapter 6). This does not imply some quasi-Foucauldian role for almshouses in disciplining the poor; they were not institutions of incarceration and punishment.[211] Officialdom intruding in the lives of the poor, regulating how they lived their lives, was commonplace in early modern England. Even as the influence of the relatively toothless church courts waned, the increase in legislation on moral behaviour and the ubiquitous houses of correction gave the secular courts plenty of work. Jane Mann was sent to the Warwick house of correction for bastardy, but the courts were also ready to intervene without any offence being committed. The Warwick quarter sessions, for instance, ordered Elizabeth Jervyes to be removed from her house and to go into service in 1654, she 'being a young woman and living in a late built house by the highway at Allesley remote from any other house…and in danger to be

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[210] Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580 – 1680* (London, 2nd edition 2003), p. 174.
[211] Unlike houses of correction, or the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century beggars' hospitals on the Continent: Jütte, *Poverty and Deviance*, pp. 169-177.

made a place for receipt of ill-disposed people'. James Wilson's house near Rugby was ordered to be pulled down in 1664, because it 'stands in a place very inconvenient being far from neighbours and fit to entertain rogues and vagabonds'.[212] Apart from the few surviving medieval leper houses such as St Nicholas Harbledown, the great majority of early modern almshouses were located in the centre of their towns and villages, on the high street or next to the church. Here the surveillance of neighbours and parish officials would have been routine and expected, but probably no more intrusive than that to which other poor people in the community were subjected.

It could be argued, moreover, that the circumstances of many almspeople, those in the great majority of almshouses without onsite supervision, gave them a degree of autonomy and independence greater than that afforded to most other poor people. Tomkins suggests that the autonomy created by the permanent appointment to an almshouse place was always regarded as inherently problematic, hence the attempts at regulation.[213] The bitter struggle between the keelmen and the hostmen (merchants) in Newcastle upon Tyne for control of the Keelmen's Hospital and its charitable funds (founded in 1702 by the contributions of the keelmen themselves), was in large part driven by the hostmen's fears that the control of their own welfare fund would give the keelmen sufficient independence to determine their own terms of employment, and resist the demands of their employers.[214] The grant of a permanent place in an almshouse could be

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[212] WQS Vol. III, Epiphany 1654, p. 207; WQS Vol. IV, Epiphany 1664, p. 262.
[213] Tomkins, 'Retirement', p. 272.
[214] Joseph M. Fewster, *The Keelmen of Tyneside. Labour Organisation and Conflict in the North-East Coal Industry, 1600 – 1830* (Woodbridge, 2011), p. 25.

regarded in the same way, as freeing the occupants from the control of an employer or master in a dangerous fashion.

Conclusion

Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, the picture that emerges of early modern almshouses is often that of a disorderly and motley array of residents. They were not always old, although this seems to have become more usual by the end of the period. Women residents were often viewed as problematic, as were children, although their presence might be tolerated in practice, particularly if they performed domestic or caring tasks for other residents. The economic circumstances of occupants could differ markedly, with some suggestion of greater discrimination in who was admitted in the later part of the period. The majority of almspeople seem not to have been subject to any greater degree of surveillance than ordinary poor people in the community. It was in the wealthier establishments where formal rules were more likely to be in evidence, but even here there appear to have been only occasional and largely ineffectual attempts by trustees and governors to impose some discipline. Nevertheless the rules, although formulaic and frequently ineffective, do reveal the anxieties of those in charge of almshouses about the dangerous freedoms potentially enjoyed by their occupants. For instance, rules about residence suggest that with an independent income many almshouse residents would have chosen to be absent if they could. Rules requiring almspeople to keep their rooms and communal areas clean suggest that, freed from the structure of a normal household, these were tasks that would not have been performed. There were breaches of the rules by almspeople and patrons alike, moreover, with masters abusing their position to benefit from almshouse property, and trustees abusing their

patronage to admit people with no right to a place. But although the reality may frequently have fallen short, the rules of eligibility and behaviour represented an ideal; an ideal, moreover, which found ready acceptance in early modern contemporary opinion.

5. The benefits of an almshouse place

'For every ancient pensioner maintained comfortably there was at least one almsperson whose entitlements and receipts were thin indeed'.[1]

The previous two chapters on the founders and occupants of early modern almshouses concluded that there was considerable range and variety amongst the people founding and living in almshouses, and that the motivations of founders and the experience of occupants were equally diverse. Similarly, the benefits the occupants received in these almshouses were surprisingly variable, and there would appear to have been no such thing as a typical almshouse. Some provided residents with comfortable accommodation, a regular monetary allowance or stipend, clothing, fuel and practical support. Other foundations, with modest or non-existent endowments, provided little more than rent-free accommodation. The result was a range of institutions providing greatly varying material benefits. Whether benefactors built their almshouses in their lifetime or specified to executors the accommodation and stipends that they intended their almspeople to receive, or whether the provision was developed and adapted by subsequent trustees and interested parties, early modern almshouses reflected contemporary views of what was appropriate for the recipients of charity. This chapter will examine what was provided for the occupants of almshouses in early modern England, and what these benefits might have represented in terms of the social and economic status of almspeople within the wider community. The first two sections use qualitative evidence to present examples of a broad array of material benefits: firstly, the

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[1] Tomkins, 'Retirement', p. 264.

accommodation provided, and then stipends, food, fuel and clothing. In the third section, a more statistical approach is adopted, in an attempt to evaluate the standard of living these benefits enabled almspeople to achieve, and how this compared with the living standards of other poor people at the time. Overall the discussion demonstrates that, in many respects, there were similarities between almshouses dwellers and those on parish poor relief, but it also outlines some crucial differences.

Accommodation

The single distinguishing feature of all almshouses is a building providing accommodation for people in need. Much of what has been written in the past about early modern almshouses concentrated on the architectural design of these buildings.[2] For instance, Godfrey's *The English Almshouse* focuses on a series of 'remarkable' buildings, and charts their 'changing architectural character'; while Prescott uses architecture to trace the changes and developments in the function of almshouses from 1050 to 1640.[3] Many examples in the literature are drawn from a small group of notable foundations, usually those with buildings of particular architectural merit or interest. This leads Heath, for instance, to assert that 'almost without exception' sixteenth- and seventeenth-century foundations consisted of 'an audit room, a suite of rooms for the master or warden; an infirmary for the sick, a common hall; a suite of living rooms for the inmates; and a chapel'.[4] In fact, it is hard to find any early modern foundation conforming to this

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[2] For example Heath, *Old English Houses*; Godfrey, *English Almshouse*; Howson, *Noble Poverty*.
[3] Godfrey *English Almshouse*, p. 7; Prescott, *English Medieval Hospital*.
[4] Heath, *Old English Houses*, p. 24.

description.[5] More typical were almshouses, often a simple row of cottages, with no chapel or communal facilities, where each almsperson had a room to themselves, or possibly two, with their own fireplace and front door. Godfrey acknowledges that most almshouses of the early modern period were just a single row of dwellings, yet he pays most attention to the design of more complex buildings, particularly the way these developed from the medieval infirmary hall to the collegiate quadrangle.[6]

The traditional model of the medieval hospital had been the infirmary hall, where a long dormitory lined with beds opened onto a chapel at one end, so that those who were too infirm could see the mass being celebrated from their beds.[7] From the fifteenth century, along with the increase in secular foundations, there was a retreat from communal living in the design and operation of almshouses and hospitals, reflecting the changes in domestic architecture of the time.[8] It became more common for almspeople to be accommodated in individual rooms or chambers, each with its own hearth. Prescott relates this development to improvements which were taking place within domestic housing of the period, when living standards for many ordinary people began to be transformed. For instance, the traditional medieval hall house, open to the rafters, with its central fire and smoke filtering out through the roof, began to be partitioned into separate rooms. The open fire was replaced with fireplaces and chimneys, which allowed for the boarding over of upper floors, and the heating of individual rooms.

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[5] The closest would probably be the wealthy early seventeenth-century foundations of the London Charterhouse; Trinity Hospital, Greenwich; Abbot's Hospital, Guildford; and Sackville College, East Grinstead; but none of these has all the features described by Heath.
[6] Godfrey, *English Almshouse,* pp. 76, 45 (*passim*).
[7] For example, the illustration in Godfrey of the infirmary hall at Beaune with beds down either side and the altar screen beyond. Godfrey, *English Almshouse,* plate 10.
[8] Prescott*, English Medieval Hospital*, pp. 4, 102-3.

Glazed windows became widely available, with John Evelyn remarking in 1671 that even poor people on alms now had window glass.[9]

W.G. Hoskins argued that this 'rebuilding of rural England', occurring first in the homes of the wealthy and then filtering down to the housing of ordinary people, was driven by a desire for greater privacy and material comfort.[10] From the fifteenth century similar changes can be seen in almshouse foundations, such as Gods House at Ewelme in Oxfordshire (1437), where thirteen individual rooms are arranged around a courtyard; or the spectacular Hospital of St Cross at Winchester, known as the House of Noble Poverty, re-founded in 1445 by Cardinal Beaufort. As the name suggests, this was a high status almshouse for decayed gentlemen, where each almsman had not only his own room but an individual *garde robe*. Even where the traditional hall type was retained, as in Browne's Hospital in Stamford, founded around 1485, or the late Tudor Lord Leycester Hospital in Warwick, founded by Robert Dudley using the town's medieval guildhall, the almsmen had individual wooden cubicles within the hall to give them some privacy. The disadvantage of the hall type, along with the lack of privacy, was warmth. At Stamford there was a single fireplace to heat the hall. A century later at Warwick, the Lord Leycester almsmen appear to have constructed a number of fireplaces in 'outrageous' positions in their living quarters in the unheated guildhall, with ramshackle flues 'carried out most recklessly through the walls encalcining many timbers'.[11] At St Mary's Chichester, a

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[9] Colin Platt, *The Great Rebuildings of Tudor and Stuart England. Revolutions in architectural taste* (London, 1994), p. 149. See also Matthew Johnson, *Housing Culture: Traditional Architecture in an English Landscape* (London, 1993).
[10] W.G. Hoskins, 'The Rebuilding of Rural England, 1570 – 1640', *Past and Present,* vol. 4 (1953), pp. 44-59.
[11] Two fireplaces were actually based with their chimneys upon first floor timbers. S.A. Pears, 'The Lord Leycester Hospital, Warwick', *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments*

thirteenth-century almshouse for women, improvements did not take place until the seventeenth century. Here there was no heating, but the scoring of a groove on one of the roof beams indicates there was a hanging brazier to heat the hall. In 1680 eight small brick houses, each with its own individual chimney, were built inside the medieval hall for the eight women, a startling transformation which graphically demonstrates the changing expectations of privacy and material comfort.

Figure 5.1 Chimney inserted inside hall at St Mary's Chichester (photo: AN)

At both St Mary's and the Lord Leycester the individual rooms were accessed internally from within the building, and there was a similar arrangement at Bishop Cosin's Palace Green almshouses in Durham (1666) and the College of Matrons in Salisbury (1682).

Society, New series 13 (1965/6), p. 41. The flues were 'no more than drainpipes ran up the roofs, and the house had frequently been on fire, but providentially, from the age and hardness of the oak timbers the fire had only smouldered'. Extract from the old Minute Book, 1851, quoted in Tibbits, 'Hospital', p. 144.

Figure 5.2 The College of Matrons, Salisbury (photo: AN)
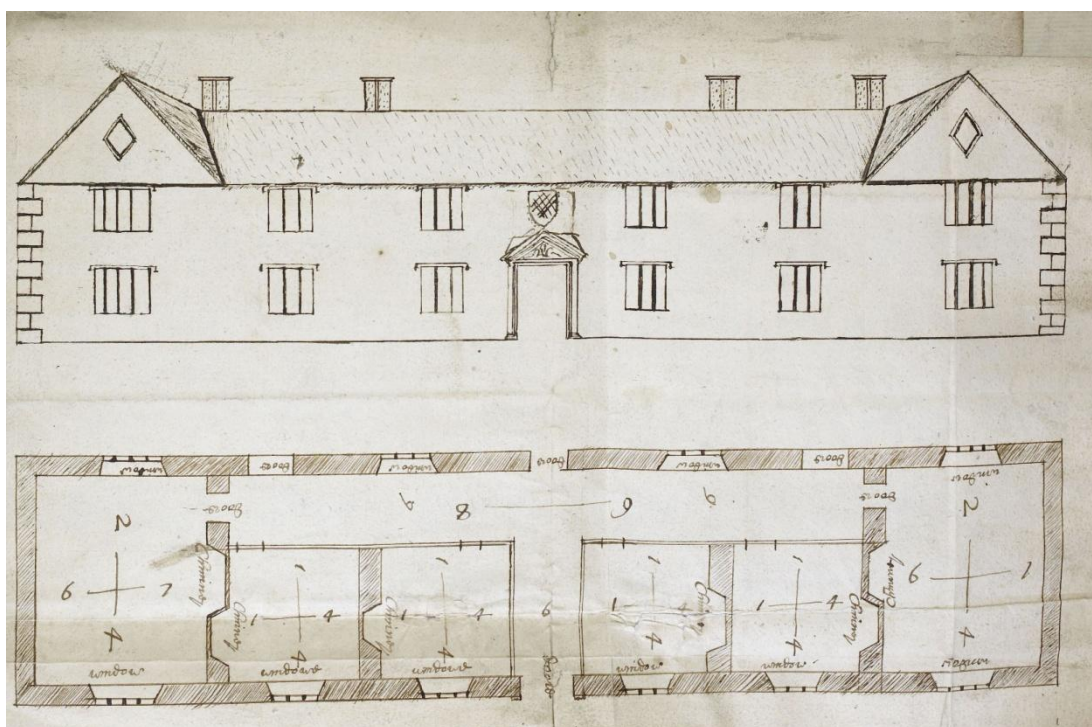
Figure 5.3 John Langstafe's plan of the Palace Green almshouses, Durham,
showing internal doors and no staircases.
(DULSC MS/91f.2, reproduced by permission of Durham University Library)

By the early modern period, however, it was more usual for almspeople's rooms to have their own front door providing direct external access.[12]

Figure 5.4 Individual front doors at New Cobham College, Kent (photo: AN)

How highly this was valued is demonstrated by the way additional external doors were often created in those existing domestic buildings which were converted to almshouses. For instance, Lawrence Sheriff left his own house in Rugby for the accommodation of four poor men in 1567, a foundation which eventually became Rugby School. Each almsman had two rooms, and the accounts show that external doors were made in the walls so that each almsman could have his own entrance.[13] Similarly, in 1607 Humphrey Davis left his house in Leamington Hastings as an almshouse for eight poor people. The building was probably converted into three or four apartments, and additional external doors were cut through the walls, once again to give

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[12] For instance, the upstairs rooms at Eyffler's almshouse had external staircases, giving them their own access. WRO CR1618/WA12/36/13.
[13] Rouse, *Rugby School*, p. 34.

each almshouse its own front door.[14] At the end of the seventeenth century, when new accommodation had to be built to replace Oken's three little almshouses destroyed in the fire of Warwick, six new rooms were built onto Eyffler's almshouse, three above and three below. From the plans for the rebuilding it can be seen that each of the six rooms had a window, a fireplace and its own door giving independent access to the outside.[15] This required two external staircases to be constructed to serve the upper rooms, a relatively expensive arrangement in marked contrast to the much simpler design at Bishop Cosin's Palace Green almshouses in Durham, where the upper rooms appear to have been accessed via lower rooms (Figure 5.3).[16] Perhaps because of the pressure on accommodation with so much property destroyed by the fire, each of Oken's replacement almsrooms was now to be shared by two women, providing an extra six places. It would seem from this that, while privacy might not have been considered essential for almspeople, autonomy and independence were very highly valued.

Jordan suggested that the purpose of an almshouse was to withdraw the poor from society, but this does not seem to be substantiated by the evidence of the majority of almshouse buildings. Unlike the medieval hospitals for lepers or travellers, most early modern almshouses were situated in the centre of their communities, often close to the parish church, and the separate entrances would have enabled the almspeople to come and go freely.

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[14] L.F. Salzman (ed.), *The Victoria History of the County of Warwick Vol. VI, Knightlow Hundred* (Oxford, 1951), p. 150.
[15] WRO M287 'The Estemat of Samᴧ Dunckley for the Almseshowes upon the backhills' (microfiche of original documents in the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington DC).
[16] DULSC MS/91 f. 2 'Draught for the schoole and Almseshouses at Durham by John Langstafe'.

Figure 5.5 John and Ann Smith's almshouses at Longport, Canterbury, showing individual front doors to the one-room cottages (photo: AN)

This was true to an extent even in grander almshouses where the almspeople's rooms were grouped around a courtyard or quadrangle, occasionally with a gatehouse, in imitation of many Tudor gentry houses, as at New Cobham College or Abbot's Hospital. In these establishments the almspeople were not confined inside but still able to access the outside world, while the gatehouse provided an additional level of privacy, which enhanced the status of the residents within and controlled intrusion by the public.[17] Paradoxically, however, if the gates were locked at night, then the residents of these higher status almshouses were deprived of some of their independence in a way that occupants of lower status almshouses were not.

Even modest almshouses, such as the simple cottage row without architectural pretension or grandeur, were often notable buildings, designed to be seen and to be instantly recognisable. They might be marked out in some way, as were Thomas Oken's three little houses in Pebble Lane, Warwick, where the building accounts for 1574 show two shillings paid to

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[17] Heal & Holmes, *Gentry*, p. 284.

Roger Pigeon for painting the three almshouse doors 'and writing Texte letters therapon'.[18] The building accounts for the barn in Black Lane, Warwick, converted in 1597 by Nicholas Eyffler's executors into an almshouse for eight women, show that the walls were of brick, with stone lintels for doors and windows, and that the roof was tiled and the windows glazed.[19] These were all relatively new features in vernacular housing of the 1590s in Warwickshire, and would have combined to create a very modern looking, substantial building. Similarly, the row of ten cottages built as almshouses in Stoneleigh in 1576 by Lady Alice Leigh were originally timber framed, like the majority of houses in Stoneleigh at the time. Twenty years later they were faced with stone, creating a distinctive image in the centre of the village amongst the surrounding half-timbered buildings.[20]

Figure 5.6 Stoneleigh almshouses, Warwickshire (photo: AN)

Lady Leveson's Hospital in Temple Balsall, Warwickshire, was built in 1677 to her own very detailed specification. Everything was to be 'well wrought' from quality materials, with suitable embellishment. The Master's house was

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[18] WRO CR2758/1.
[19] WRO CR1618/WA12/36/13.
[20] Alcock, *People at Home*, p. 142.

to tower over the almswomen's accommodation, emphasising the difference in status and reinforcing the hierarchy of the establishment, while the roof was to be capped with a 'fitting bell to call to prayers'.[21]

Many almshouse founders used their buildings as sites of memorialisation and display, where the appearance of the building was designed to draw attention to the status and generosity of the founder. This could be through the character or grandeur of the building itself, as at Abbot's Hospital, Guildford (figure 3.8); Morden College, Blackheath; and the College of Matrons, Salisbury (figure 5.2); or through decorative features such as coats of arms and inscriptions, as at John Greenway's almshouse in Tiverton, Devon (figure 3.6). At Robert Berkeley's Hospital in Worcester, founded in 1692, a statue of the founder appears in a niche above the door of the chapel, which itself towers over the cottages for the twelve poor men. The doorways to each of these are also richly decorated with the Berkeley arms (figure 3.7). Through these physical representations of their status and charity, founders were also exhibiting social and economic power. Buildings convey meaning, or as William Whyte expressed it: 'buildings are more than utilitarian; they are instruments by which emotions, ideas and beliefs are articulated'.[22] Observers are left in no doubt about the virtue and status of these founders, and, by association, of the humble poor people fortunate enough to have been honoured with a place.

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[21] WRO CR112/Ba177/1 Agreement for Building the first Hospital. The women's accommodation was to be single storey, eight feet high to the eves, compared with the Master's house which was nineteen feet to the eves.

[22] William Whyte, 'How do buildings mean? Some Interpretations in the History of Architecture', *History and Theory,* vol. 45, no. 2 (May 2006), p. 155.

Figure 5.7 Berkeley Almshouses, Worcester (c. 1705) with statue of the founder, Robert Berkeley, over the entrance to the chapel (photo: AN)

Markus regarded it as the 'covert programme of all buildings' to 'reproduce the sponsors' position of power which gave them access to the resources to invest in the first place'.[23] Unsurprisingly, then, one of the most spectacular buildings, as befitted its royal foundation, was the Royal Naval Hospital, Greenwich, founded by William and Mary by royal charter in 1694 for aged seamen, and designed by Sir Christopher Wren.[24] The status of the founder did not necessarily dictate the quality of the building, however. The Holte almshouses at the gate of Aston Hall, for instance, while ornamented to

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[23] Thomas A. Markus, *Buildings and Power* (London, 1993), p. 317.
[24] Yet here there were complaints almost immediately about the grandeur of the building being unsuitable as accommodation for poor seamen. Dr Johnson remarked after visiting in 1763 that it was 'too magnificent for a place of charity'. Howson, *Almshouses*, p. 51.

mirror the architectural style of the exquisite hall itself, were very mean buildings by comparison.[25]

Spectacular architecture may have served to enhance the status of the institution and honour the memory of the founder, but was not essential to the comfort of the residents. Yet substantially-built accommodation, kept in good repair, might well have provided a degree of comfort for those almspeople above that which other poor people would usually have experienced. Only a minority of early modern almshouses have survived in their original buildings, however, and even then, modern improvements mean that it is often not possible to discern the original internal arrangement of the accommodation. For instance, the wooden cubicles at the Lord Leycester Hospital were removed in extensive renovations in the 1960s which returned the medieval guildhall to its original state, and no record appears to have been made of the men's accommodation before its destruction. The wooden partitions and the windows, moreover, appeared to date from the eighteenth century, raising intriguing questions about how the men were housed before that date.[26] This lack of interest in the details of the men's accommodation, in comparison with the attention paid to the medieval guild buildings, might be considered typical of the time. It has, however, been replicated more recently: a collection of essays on the guild of the Holy Cross

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[25] A note on their condition just prior to demolition in the 1930s describes them as 'very dilapidated' single room dwellings with 'floors of blue brick paving': two typewritten pages dated 13 April 1931 and signed by C.E. Bateman (presumably a trustee of the almshouses), inserted between pages 28 and 29 of the Warwick University Library copy of Davidson, *Holtes of Aston.*

[26] Philip B. Chatwin, 'The Hospital of Lord Leycester, formerly the hall and other buildings of the medieval guilds in Warwick', *Transactions & Proceedings of the Birmingham Archaeological Society,* vol. 70 (1952), p. 46. Chatwin suggests that some of the men might have been accommodated in the rooms formerly provided for the four guild chaplains, but there were twelve almsmen, so they either had to share accommodation (unusual for men at the time) or the guildhall was partitioned at an earlier date. The seventeenth-century stewards' accounts clearly refer to individual men's rooms and windows, for example WRO CR1600/42/9 and WRO CR1600/42/10.

and its buildings at Stratford-upon-Avon devotes very few pages to the almshouses which form an integral part of the building complex, and none whatever to the accommodation which would have been provided.[27] In contrast, a recent doctoral thesis on Henry VII's royal almshouse at Westminster has used contemporary drawings to carefully reconstruct a floor plan of the almsmen's living accommodation, showing that each man had two rooms and a *garde robe*, though the building itself was demolished in 1779.[28] At Hawkins' Hospital in Chatham, the current small almshouse buildings date from the eighteenth century, and the only record of the original accommodation is to be found in seventeenth-century inventories referring to the individual almsmen's rooms, from which we can deduce that each almsman had his own set of rooms, furnished with a bed, bedding, tables, stools and chairs.[29] This provision of furniture might have been essential for men who had spent most of their lives at sea, and may have usually lived in lodgings when ashore.

At some other almshouses it seems that furniture was provided, as at Eyffler's in Warwick, where the building accounts of 1597 show that the women's rooms were equipped with a table board and a bed (to be shared between two), and, in a nice touch of domesticity, were even decorated with several yards of painted cloth.[30] Sherburn and Greatham Hospitals in county Durham provided the men with beds; at Sherburn they were given bedding

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[27] J.R. Mulryne (ed.), *The Guild and Guild Buildings of Shakespeare's Stratford: Society, Religion, School and Stage* (Farnham, 2012), pp. 20, 26, 154-6.
[28] Christine Merie Fox, 'The Royal Almshouse at Westminster c. 1500 – c. 1600' (unpublished PhD thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2012), p. 152.
[29] For instance the inventory of 1618 in the Hospital Minute Book 1617 - 1691, MALSC CH108/21, pp. 53-4.
[30] WRO CR1618/WA12/36/13. This was not the only attention paid to the women's comfort in this relatively poor almshouse. They were also provided with mats for their seats in church. McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England*, p. 209.

and bed linen as well. At Browne's Hospital, Stamford, an inventory taken in 1731 showed that each man was provided with a bed, a shelf, a candlestick and a snuffer. By 1766 they had acquired a second shelf and a cupboard.[31] It is likely that basic furnishings such as beds were provided at some other almshouses. For instance, in the surviving wills of a handful of Lady Leveson's almswomen from the beginning of the eighteenth century, none mentions a bed amongst their possessions, which suggests that the beds the women slept in were provided by and belonged to the almshouse. This was the case at Abbot's Hospital, Guildford, where the rooms were equipped with 'halfe headed Bedsteds'.[32] The provision of beds suggests that it was expected that many older people would be admitted from lodgings, or from a relative's home, where they may not have owned their own bed. In contrast, the inventory drawn up on the death of Richard Hargrave, husbandman, who died in the Stoneleigh almshouse in 1640 with £43 in debts owing to him, included amongst his possessions a 'joyned chest', and an 'olde bedsted' and 'woolbedde', with a pillow, two blankets and two pairs of sheets, suggesting that he had been a householder and owned these himself.[33] Occasionally almspeople had to agree on entering the almshouse to leave their possessions to the establishment, to be sold or passed on to their successor, as was commonly expected of parish paupers. Indeed, the entry in the Leamington Hastings almshouse accounts for 1694, recording Nicholas Jelly's funeral expenses and the sale of his clothes to recoup some

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[31] Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, *An Inventory of Historical Monuments. The Town of Stamford* (London, 1977), p. ix.
[32] Brian Taylor, *Abbot's Hospital, Guildford* (Guildford, 1999), p. 45.
[33] Alcock , *People at Home*, p. 143.

of the costs, could easily have come straight from an overseers' account book: 'Charges in burying him more than his clothes sold for 10s. 1d.' [34]

An important feature of almost all almshouses was the provision of an individual hearth. Unlike the unheated medieval infirmary hall, individual almshouse cottages or rooms were invariably heated, with the ubiquitous row of chimneys often a first indicator of the identity of the building.

Figure 5.8 Burghley almshouses, Stamford, Lincolnshire (photo: AN)

Individual fireplaces, provided in most almshouses, were used both for warmth and cooking, as in the great majority of almshouses food was not provided. Where there were communal facilities, as in some of the grander almshouses, the expectation was that the almspeople would eat and spend time together, as for instance in Henry Howard's Trinity Hospital at Greenwich, where there was a sub-hall for the men to congregate in, and fires were only lit in the men's own rooms if they were ill.[35] But most almshouses had no communal facilities and people lived in their rooms. Inventories of almspeople's personal possessions are uncommon, but, in the

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[34] WRO DR43a/195. For pauper burials, see Hindle, *On the Parish?* p. 281.
[35] Kipps, 'Trinity Hospital', plan of the hospital between pages 296 and 297; Imray, 'Trinity Hospital', p. 131.

few which survive, cooking implements are recorded. For instance, Joan Patrick who died in the Stratford-upon-Avon almshouse in 1597 left a brass pot, four kettles, a skillet, chafing dish and platters, and also bellows, pot hooks and a fire shovel.[36] When Eyffler's almshouse in Warwick was built in 1597, the building accounts record expenditure on four pot hangings in the chimneys 'to hang on their potts', indicating that the women would be cooking in their rooms.[37] The basis of most poor people's diet at the time would have been pottage, cooked in a single pot over the fire, containing vegetables, hedgerow herbs, barley or oatmeal, and occasional small pieces of meat.[38] Although wheat flour bread cooked by commercial bakers was becoming the norm, particularly in southern England and in the towns, older people may still have baked barley bread or oatcakes on the hearth in the traditional way.[39] Without a fire, poor people would have been limited to a more expensive and restricted diet of baker's bread and cheese.[40]

The extent of the accommodation provided to each almsperson is not always known, but information exists for about two thirds of the almshouses in Durham, Warwickshire and Kent (see Table 5.1 below). This accommodation varied from the simple cubicles of the Lord Leycester and the 'huts' at Sherburn Hospital, to the luxurious three rooms provided by Sir John Banks at Maidstone and the five rooms each for clergy widows at Bromley College (including a bedroom for a maid) at the other extreme. The

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[36] Jones (ed.), *Inventories,* p. 171.
[37] WRO CR1618/WA12/36/13.
[38] Joan Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England. Phases, Fads, Fashions 1500 – 1760* (London, 2007), p. 149.
[39] Mary Barker-Read, 'The treatment of the aged poor in five selected West Kent parishes from Settlement to Speenhamland (1662 – 1797)', (unpublished PhD thesis, Open University 1988), p. 91.
[40] Thirsk, *Food*, p. 217.

commonest form of provision, however, was for each almsperson to have their own accommodation of one or two rooms.

Table 5.1 Accommodation in almshouses 1550 - 1725				
	Number of almshouses			
Type of accommodation	Durham	Warwickshire	Kent	Total
Cubicles/huts	1	2	0	**3**
Shared room	4	1	0	**5**
Shared house or two rooms	1	9	12	**22**
One room each	6	3	14	**23**
Two rooms each	0	8	22	**26**
Three or more rooms each	0	0	3	**3**
Sub-total	**12**	**23**	**51**	**86**
Not known	7	9	22	38
Total	**19**	**32**[41]	**73**	**124**[42]

Source: Appendix 1

There were, however, distinct regional differences in the generosity of the accommodation provided. For instance, the accommodation in County Durham is poor compared with the other two counties, being either shared or at best single rooms for each almsperson. The three women of St John's Hospital, Barnard Castle, for example, lived in a 'low thatched building containing one room only'.[43] The seal of King James' Hospital in Gateshead (formerly the ancient hospital of St Edmund) shown on the title page, depicts the almshouse as a low, single storeyed building with a central chimney,

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[41] Chamberlaine's almshouse had two different types of accommodation, on the upper and lower floors, hence the total comes to 32 instead of 31.
[42] See note above.
[43] House of Commons Parliamentary Papers (HCPP), Reports of the Commissioners appointed to inquire concerning Charities in England and Wales, no. 21 (1829), p. 75.

suggesting that there were at most two rooms for the three almsmen. This difference remained constant over the period and may reflect lower norms and expectations of domestic comfort in the northern region. The contrast is particularly with Kent, where only a small proportion of almspeople had to share and where the largest single category is two or more rooms per person. Only in Kent were there almshouses where more than two rooms each were provided, possibly reflecting the greater wealth and expectations of domestic comfort in the county. Yet if the provision of accommodation merely reflected local wealth and living standards, it might be expected that almspeople's accommodation generally improved over time, as material standards of living rose. Certainly the three most generous Kent almshouses all date from the second half of the seventeenth century: Bromley College (1666), Banks' almshouses in Maidstone (1679) and Philipot's almshouse at Eltham (1680), but not from the early eighteenth century as might be expected. In Warwickshire there is no evidence of general improvements over time. The provision of two rooms each occurs in two sixteenth-century Warwickshire almshouses (Ford's and Stoneleigh), while an eighteenth-century foundation (Gramer's at Mancetter) was still built with only single rooms. After the fire of Warwick in 1694, Oken's almspeople, previously sharing a small house between two, now had to share two to a room in the rebuilt accommodation. Adrian Green suggests that the housing conditions of poor people did indeed improve in the latter part of the seventeenth century, but this was followed by a deterioration in the eighteenth century. It may be that the design of some almshouses followed this pattern, reflecting changing

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cultural expectations about what was suitable accommodation for poor people.[44]

Green cautions against assuming that all poor people lived in miserable conditions, as suggested by late eighteenth-century commentators, and it is hard to know by what standard to judge the accommodation provided in almshouses.[45] Nonetheless, for the many almshouse occupants who did not have to share rooms, the provision of private living space in almshouses may have been generous in comparison with the accommodation of other poor people. Simple one roomed cottages inhabited by poor people, often with families, would have been a common feature in both rural and urban areas.[46]

Figure 5.9 Pair of sixteenth-century cottages at Berkswell, Warwickshire, each with one room, hearth and boarded loft (photo: AN)

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[44] Adrian Green, 'Heartless and Unhomely? Dwellings of the Poor in East Anglia and North-East England', in McEwan & Sharpe (eds), *Accommodating Poverty*, pp. 90-1.
[45] Ibid., p. 69.
[46] Ibid., p. 73.

A surviving example from Berkswell in Warwickshire of a pair of sixteenth century cottages shows each to have consisted of a ground floor room approximately 15 feet square, with a fireplace, front door and boarded loft above (figure 5.9).[47] According to Alcock these are the same dimensions as the rooms in the Stoneleigh almshouses built in 1574 (also in Warwickshire), where the ground floor room with fireplace and upper room were described by Prescott as 'spacious houses'.[48] These almshouse room sizes were comparable with, but slightly larger than, two other small cottages in Stoneleigh surveyed by Alcock.[49] Similarly, Oken's new almsrooms at Warwick of 1696 were shown on the plan attached to Dunkley's estimate as roughly 15 feet by 12 feet, with two of them 15 feet square.[50] Philipots's almshouses in Eltham, Kent, built around the same time, had ground floor rooms approximately 14 feet square, with a small scullery behind, and a bedroom above 14 feet by 12 feet.[51] These dimensions appear to have been fairly typical of single bay buildings at the time.[52] A seventeenth-century manorial survey from Urchfont in Wiltshire lists small cottages ranging from 16 feet square down to a tiny 10 feet by 8 feet, with most described as being

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[47] The building, now the Berkswell Museum, was originally of timber and wattle and daub construction. Bricks were used to replace the wattle and daub infill at the end of the eighteenth century, and the thatch roof was replaced with tiles in the early twentieth century. The two cottages were converted into one home for the village District Nurse after 1915.

[48] Prescott, *English Medieval Hospital*, p. 165.

[49] Alcock, *People at Home*, pp. 126-142.

[50] As a comparison, the main room of the medieval cottage from Hangleton, reconstructed at the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum, Singleton, West Sussex, is approximately 13' square.

[51] John Kennett, *Thomas Philipot's Almshouse Charity of Eltham and Chislehurst* (Eltham, 1997), p. 6.

[52] A bay, the area between two supporting timber uprights, was used as a unit of measurement, and could be anything from 9ft. to 16ft., the actual size depending on the timber available. In the Stoneleigh cottages examined by Nat Alcock, a bay varied between 10ft. and 15ft. Alcock, *People at Home*, pp. 126-138.

13 or 14 feet by 10 feet.[53] Joseph Bettey describes these buildings as little more than cabins or hovels, but it is possible, even with these dimensions, that they were single bay cottages with one room, a fireplace and a boarded over loft.[54]

Larger accommodation often migrated down the housing scale over time, to become subdivided and multi-occupied by people poorer than the original occupants. For many poor people, moreover, lodging in someone else's home would have been a common circumstance. From the Warwick census of 1587 Lee Beier has calculated that forty-five per cent of the poor were either inmates themselves or lived in households with inmates.[55] The list of poor people receiving a disbursement in Gateshead in 1681, with their amounts, shows several names grouped, as in, for example, 'Mary Porter & Widow Woodburne 8d.'; 'Timothy Walton, Ann Thompson, Ann Taylor 2s. 2d.'; suggesting that these unrelated individuals were living in the same household.[56] Many poorer people could not have expected to retain a home of their own in old age, particularly once widowed; others, who had never married, or who had spent a lifetime in service, might never have had a home to call their own. Parish paupers were often expected to share accommodation, often against their will and with little say about with whom they had to share. Lynn Botelho, amongst others, has described the 'combined households' of many of the elderly poor in Cratfield, in Suffolk, while in Poslingford, the other Suffolk parish in her study, it was usual for the

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[53] Joseph Bettey (ed.), *Wiltshire Farming in the Seventeenth Century* (Trowbridge, 2005), pp. 322-4.
[54] A manorial survey for Brailes in Warwickshire records three cottages of a single bay only. Alan Tennant, 'The property and landholding survey of 1607', *Brailes History: Episodes from a forgotten past,* no. 4 (Spring 2005), p. 28.
[55] Beier, 'Social problems', p. 61.
[56] DRO EP/Ga.SM 5/1 Gateshead St Mary's Vestry book 1681 – 1807.

parish authorities to board out poor older people with neighbours.[57] The parish officers of Cranbrook in Kent, for example, frequently lodged older people with other poor pensioners, and seemed to have moved people around at will.[58] Similarly, when the parish of Southam in Warwickshire needed to house Thomas Basley in 1680, they moved two elderly widows in together and gave the cottage of one of them to Basley.

While for many older people sharing accommodation would have been the norm, only a minority of residents of almshouses were expected to share, with most having at least a room to themselves. Those who were expected to share were usually women. For instance, the two room apartments of Eyffler's almshouse in Warwick were each shared by two women, and it seems this was also the arrangement initially at Lady Leveson's almshouse in Temple Balsall. At Ford's almshouse in Coventry for five couples, if a woman was widowed she was expected to share her room with another widow. Yet if she died, her husband was allowed to continue to occupy the room on his own. This suggests that it was considered acceptable, possibly even desirable, for women to share. Conversely it was rare for men in almshouses to be expected to share, although the north-east may have been an exception to this.[59] For younger people such as household servants, accommodation would usually have been in shared rooms, and for the many almswomen who had been personal servants

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[57] Botelho, *Old Age*, p. 123.
[58] Barker-Read, 'Aged poor', pp. 76-79.
[59] It is possible that the men of King James Hospital in Gateshead, and some of the men of Sherburn Hospital, Durham, may have had to share. According to an anonymous commentator, in the mid-eighteenth century the master of Sherburn, Dr David Gregory, demolished 'all the little wretched huts in which they were huddled together before', and erected new apartments 'that each of the Old Men might have one entirely to himself'. Anon., *A Brief History of Sherburn Hospital in the county of Durham, with observations on the "scheme" proposed by the Charity Commissioners "for the application and management and the estates and possessions thereof"* (London & Oxford, 1855), p. 13.

before admission, such as those at Lady Katherine Leveson's Hospital, this might have been all they had experienced. For many almspeople, then, and for women in particular, the sole occupancy of a rent-free room would have been a considerable benefit.

Whether this would have marked them out from most other poor people is harder to say. While many recipients of poor relief would be placed in multi-occupied houses or in lodgings, this does not imply that they were necessarily in shared rooms. The overseers of Lapworth, Warwickshire, for instance, were ordered by the justices in 1672 to provide Elizabeth Fowler with 'a convenient room in some house at Lapworth', and pay her 6d. a week.[60] When, in 1655, the overseers of Kenardington, Kent, paid for 'hous roome' for Goodwife Maunt, they also paid for a key for her, suggesting that she had her own, lockable room.[61] The importance of having one's own secure space is shown by Joyce Astley's series of complaints to the Warwickshire justices. She had to share a house in Willoughby with Elizabeth and Anne Radway. They cut up her clothes and shut her out of the house, for which they were sent to the house of correction.[62] In County Durham the quarter sessions ordered the parish of Castle Eden to provide 'a convenient house' for Magdalen Lamb 'to live in alone by her selfe' and not be made to share with her mother, as her mother's house was 'but a very small cottage & not able to containe both their said familyes'.[63] Access to one's own hearth also appears to have been highly valued for the independence and privacy it afforded. Isabel Robinson found it impossible to

[60] WQS Trinity 1672, Vol. V, p. 187.
[61] CKS P206/12/1 Kenardington Churchwardens' and Overseers' Accounts 1642 - 1707.
[62] WQS Epiphany, Easter & Trinity 1651, Vol. III, pp. 52, 56, 64.
[63] DRO Q/S/OB 6, Sessions Order Books Volume 6, Jan 1668 – Jan 1681, order made 14 January 1679/80.

live peaceably in the same house as her brother's family in Berkswell, Warwickshire, sharing the single hearth. She complained to the quarter sessions, and in 1641 the court ordered the parish to build another chimney in the cottage to resolve the matter.[64] Edmund Verney despaired of the four families occupying the church house in East Claydon, Buckinghamshire, who were allowed to 'do what they please'. This included refusing to use the single hearth provided, 'because every one will be private', and instead making their own 'fires without chimneys' against the walls.[65]

From these examples it seems that many poor people had a clear sense of the standard of housing to which they were entitled, and it bore a distinct resemblance to the accommodation usually available in almshouses. As a minimum, this was a room of their own, with their own hearth, for themselves and their family.[66] Until the advent of large workhouses brought the segregation of men, women and children into dormitories, there is also evidence that this was not just an ideal, but was achieved in much of the housing provided for the poor. A register of all the occupants of Faversham's poor houses taken in 1754, for instance, shows that each individual or family had at least one room to themselves, occasionally two. Gabriel Berry and his wife, for example, had a house with two rooms. Widow Butler and her daughter had two rooms, one of which was noted as being without a fireplace (suggesting the other rooms had hearths); while Daniel Deale, his wife and six children lived in just one large room. Nobody was sharing a room with anyone with whom they were not related, although a note beside

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[64] WQS Michaelmas 1641, Vol. II, p. 100.
[65] Letter of Edmund Verney to Sir Ralph Verney, 29 January 1677/8, quoted in Broad, 'Housing', pp. 158-9.
[66] This accords with Broad's finding that poor people retained a belief in their right to their own home, even after workhouses had become the preferred solution. Broad, 'Housing', p. 158.

Mary Pillay's name suggested this might occasionally be required: 'One Room, drinks and is not fit to be put with ano[the]r'.[67]

The representation of the town poorhouse on a 1684 estate map of Chilvers Coton, Warwickshire, shows that it was occupied by six paupers, four men and two women, (and possibly their families).

Figure 5.10 The town house at Chilvers Coton, Warwickshire, shown in the bottom left-hand corner of the map (WRO CR136/M14 'An exact map of the three common fields belonging to the town of Chilvers Coton', 1684. Reproduced by permission of Warwick County Record Office)

The house appears to be two-storeyed, and is drawn showing at least three chimneys, several windows and at least two external doors; in other words, it was a substantial building, subdivided, with more than one entrance and at

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[67] CKS Fa/Ac5/1 Faversham Wardmote Minutes 1741 – 1820 Pt. 1.

least three hearths.[68] It seems distinctly possible that each of the occupants had their own room and most could have had their own fireplace, as they would in most almshouses of the time. Another multi-occupied house in nearby Ansley 'filled with poor people' was a three hearth house.[69] The advantage of almshouse accommodation over parish housing may therefore not have been in the size and amount of accommodation, nor even always in the provision of discrete space for each poor person, so much as in the secure nature of that accommodation, and in the autonomy and independence allowed the occupants through features such as having one's own front door.

Ascribing a monetary value to the benefit of rent-free almshouse accommodation is not easy. Parish poor relief accounts in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries show that many parishes paid rent for poor people, either instead of, or in addition to, regular relief. In Terling, Essex, for instance, the overseers paid rents of between £1 and £1 10s. a year for poor families at the end of the seventeenth century, leading Wrightson and Levine to estimate the sum of £1 as a typical annual rent in their construction of a poor family's budget.[70] But it is hard to know how typical this actually was. At the opposite end of the scale, Sir Richard Newdigate of Arbury in Warwickshire charged rents of as little as 1s. or 2s. a year for many of his small tenements. These were clearly not market rents, but peppercorn rents

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[68] WRO CR136/M14 Map of the three common fields of Chilvers Coton 1684. This house is possibly the same as the 'towne houses' at Griff in Chilvers Coton, recorded as having 4 hearths in 1670, Arkell & Alcock (eds), *Warwickshire Hearth Tax*, p. 371.
[69] This property was recorded in the hearth tax assessment for the following year as 'full of poore people and given by a gent to the parish for that use', but it was then certified as having just one hearth. Ibid., p. 370.
[70] Keith Wrightson and David Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village. Terling, 1525 – 1700* (Oxford, 1979, new edition 1995), p. 40.

on tied accommodation for his workforce.[71] The churchwardens of St Oswalds in Durham rented out three small houses owned by the church for 4s. a year each to Widows Tomlinson, Turner and Tayler in 1595. In 1664 the rents of these cottages were still only 4s. 4d. a year, and only a little more in 1699, suggesting that they were let out at deliberately low rents to poor parishioners.[72] More typical perhaps are the rents of 8s. and 10s. a year paid by the Pittington overseers for several poor people in 1695, and the 12s. a year paid by the parish of St Mary le Bow for Dorothy Davison in 1680. Yet in Winston, three paupers were having their rents of 5s. a year paid in 1683, while in the same year Gateshead was paying several rents of only 1s. or 2s. a year.[73] In most cases we have no means of knowing what this accommodation consisted of, but where rents of 3s. or 4s. a year or less were being paid for poor widows, it is likely that these referred to one roomed cottages or a room in someone's house.

Many early modern almshouses were new foundations with purpose-built accommodation. Usually the trustees of the almshouse charity ensured that the buildings were maintained in good repair, and there were sometimes specific funds dedicated to repairs and renovations. The maintenance of almshouse property was often prioritised over the support of the poor residents. Katherine Wrott, for instance, founded an almshouse for four people at Sutton-at-Hone, Kent, in 1596 with only sufficient endowment to

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[71] For instance, Thomas Knight and William Mortimer. Steve Hindle, 'Work, Reward and Labour Discipline in Late Seventeenth-Century England', in Steve Hindle, Alexandra Shepard & John Walter (eds), *Remaking English Society. Social Relations and Social Change in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge, 2013), pp. 272-3.
[72] DRO EP/Du.SO 203-4, Churchwardens Accounts 1580 - 1656, 1658 - 1822.
[73] DRO EP/Pi 22; EP/Du.MB 10; EP/Wi 18; EP/Ga.SM 5/1.

maintain the property, but not the residents.[74] At Jane Gibson's almshouse in Bishopwearmouth, founded in 1725, the residents had to forego their stipend for the first six months after admission as a contribution to the repair fund.[75] Repairs were expensive and a constant issue for both almshouse trustees and parish officials; parish overseers' accounts record many examples of payments made to repair paupers' houses.[76] This does not necessarily imply that houses were poorly built, but timber framed buildings with wattle and daub or mud walls and thatch for the roof would have required regular maintenance to keep them weatherproof, while the use of brick, stone and tiles, where available, would have reduced the maintenance required. It is possible that the impression of early modern almshouses providing good quality accommodation is biased by better survival rates of the more substantial buildings using more durable materials, and these are not necessarily representative of all almshouse accommodation. It is nonetheless likely that most almshouses provided a considerable degree of comfort and privacy, possibly greater than that available to most poor people in ordinary housing. Whether this was superior to parish accommodation of the time is not entirely clear; it may be that paupers' expectations of the standard of housing to which they were entitled, coupled with the desire of parish officials to protect their long term investments, created a congruity between parish housing and almshouses which is perhaps unexpected.

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[74] W.K. Jordan, 'Social Institutions in Kent: A Study of the Changing Pattern of Social Aspirations', *Archaeologia Cantiana,* vol. LXXV (1961), p. 44.
[75] HCPP no. 23 (1830), p. 69.
[76] For instance the parish of Leamington Hastings in Warwickshire paid £5 9s. 5d. for repairing Nicholas Jelly's house in 1672. Widow Ann Tarsey's house was repaired several times, costing £4 4s. in 1661; a further 16s. in 1664; and £1 3s. 6d. in 1669. WRO Dr43a/19 Leamington Hastings Overseers' Accounts 1655 - 1679.

The paradox is that not all almspeople valued their accommodation as much as we might expect. The frequent rules against non-residence suggest that for many poor people the stipend, where it existed, was the more important benefit, and that recipients in many cases would have preferred to be non-resident if given the chance. Certainly, where rules were non-existent or not enforced, some almspeople seem to have taken the opportunity to be non-resident, as at St Bartholomew's Hospital, Oxford, in the eighteenth century.[77] Some surviving medieval almshouses had out-pensioners as well as (or instead of) resident almspeople, such as St John's Canterbury and St Nicholas Harbledown in Kent, and Sherburn and Greatham Hospitals in Durham. Kepier Grammar School and Almshouse was founded in 1574 without accommodation; there was no actual almshouse building until almost a century after its foundation. In establishments such as these, out-pensioners could receive the stipend and make their own living arrangements.[78] Sometimes this was necessary because of the inadequacy of the accommodation. When Sherburn Hospital was re-founded by Act of Parliament in 1585, the number of almsmen was increased, but without any corresponding increase in the amount of accommodation. Yet when new buildings were erected at Sherburn in the early nineteenth century, only a few of the out-brethren chose to become resident.[79] Accommodation may have been a valuable resource, but it was not necessarily desired by all.

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[77] Alannah Tomkins, *The Experience of Urban Poverty 1723 – 82. Parish, Charity and Credit* (Manchester, 2006), p. 93.

[78] There was a similar arrangement for the cathedral almsmen of Durham and Rochester. While they were required to live 'in or near' the cathedral, there is no evidence that they were provided with accommodation. DCL Add.MS 375/1 Chapter Act Book Vol. I, 1578 - 1726, transcr. Dr Greenwell (1898), p. 196; C.S. Knighton, 'The Reformed Chapter, 1540 – 1660', in Nigel Yates & Paula A. Welsey (eds), *Faith and Fabric. A History of Rochester Cathedral 604 – 1994* (Woodbridge, 1996), p. 67.

[79] DRO Du 6/1/6, Charity Commissioners, Further Report 30 January 1830.

Stipends and material benefits

In the earliest forms of almshouse, the medieval hospitals, which had often been modelled on monastic institutions, residents lived communally and had all their needs met within the institution. For instance, the charter of the twelfth-century St Cross Hospital, Winchester, provided thirteen poor men with 'necessary clothing … and beds for their infirmities; and daily a good loaf of wheaten bread of the weight of five measures, three dishes at dinner, and one for supper, and drink in sufficient quantity'.[80] The later development of individual accommodation in almshouses, providing greater privacy and comfort for the occupants, had implications, however, for the way that almshouse life was lived. The move away from communal living necessitated the introduction, in many almshouses, of monetary allowances or stipends with which almspeople could purchase their own food and necessities. Rexroth has suggested that the provision of individual rooms, each with its own hearth, in fifteenth-century guild almshouses allowed aged members to retain the autonomy and status of a householder, even once they had become poor pensioners.[81] It is likely that the stipend or allowance performed the same function. Even at an institution like St Cross where the men were still expected to eat together in the common hall, the design of the accommodation suggests a greater emphasis on individuality and autonomy, with much of the brethren's time spent in the men's own chambers rather than in the common hall.

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[80] John McIlwain, *The Hospital of St Cross and St Cross Church* (Andover, 1993), unpaginated.
[81] Rexroth, *Deviance and Power*, p. 254.

A very few traditional foundations continued to provide food for their residents in addition to a monetary allowance. After its refounding, for instance, Sherburn Hospital in Durham continued to feed and clothe fifteen in-brethren, but it is unlikely that this was done to a lavish standard. Bishop Chandler's visitation in 1735, which resulted in new rules being drawn up, established the diet of the Sherburn brethren, probably as a result of complaints, and ordered that all who were not sick should eat together in the common hall. At Sherburn, where, like Greatham Hospital, the master and brethren appear to have been supported by a large establishment of servants, the men had all their food supplied and cooked for them. The prescribed diet was nutritious, though monotonous, consisting of one pound of boiled or roasted meat daily for each man, a quart of beer, and a weekly allowance of bread and cheese. On Fridays and fast days the meat was replaced by a pudding.[82] The quantities seem generous, particularly for elderly men, and certainly compare favourably with nineteenth-century workhouse diets.[83] At the traditionally-modelled Trinity Hospital Greenwich there were a cook, butler and nurse to meet the needs of the almsmen. During Lent in 1617 the Warden reported that the men had been fed 'milk pottage, butter, herrings and dried cod for dinner and pottage, butter, dried cod and cheese for supper, with herb pottage, buttered wheat and carrot roots for variety'.[84] Prescott describes how the men of the fifteenth-century Higham Ferrers Bede House used their 7d. a week allowance to buy their own meat, which they each gave to the nurse to cook for them in the

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[82] HCPP no. 23 (1830), p. 128.
[83] T. May, *The Victorian Workhouse* (Princes Risborough, 1997), pp. 23-4.
[84] Imray, 'Trinity Hospital', p. 123.

communal pot.[85] This may well have been the arrangement at the Lord Leycester Hospital in Warwick. Here the seventeenth-century stewards' accounts list payments to a nurse, and to a woman and a boy to weed the gardens and scare away the birds; also the purchase of vegetable seeds and nets. No food items appear in the accounts other than the celebration wassail cake at Christmas, indicating that the men usually provided their own food (or otherwise existed wholly on a diet of vegetables and cake). The shared vegetable plot suggests that the nurse may have cooked up a communal vegetable stew (pottage) to which she added the men's individual portions of meat, as at Higham Ferrers.[86] Many almshouses had gardens, often an individual plot for each resident, for them to grow their own food. How practical this was for many elderly almspeople is debatable, but along with the domestic architecture of many almshouse buildings, it may reflect an idealised representation of almspeople as sturdily independent poor cottagers.[87]

A few other almshouses are known to have given their residents some basic provisions. For instance, the 1617 foundation document for Coningsby Hospital in Hereford specified a regular supply of bread, ale, cheese, butter and firewood for the men, and cows to be kept to supply them with milk. Over and above their weekly allowance, they were also to have a dinner of roast beef and supper of mutton and broth served in the common hall on the main festivals.[88] Sir Roger Manwood's almspeople at Hackington in Kent were to be served dinner in the patron's house every Sunday, although it is not clear

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[85] Prescott, *English Medieval Hospital*, p. 68.
[86] WRO CR 1600/423.
[87] Lloyd, 'Cottage conversations', pp. 78, 82-5.
[88] HCPP no. 32 part II (1837 - 8), p. 54.

whether this was continued after Manwood's death. This stipulation appears to have been a reflection of the ancient tradition of household hospitality towards the poor, the passing of which was already being lamented in Manwood's time.[89] In times of dearth, it could be argued that the provision of food rather than money was of greater benefit to the poor, but despite this, only a small proportion of early modern almshouses provided any form of food. The great majority of almspeople would have purchased their own food and cooked it themselves.

Not all almshouses provided stipends or financial allowances, but many did. The value of these could vary considerably, however. In late medieval almshouses, the stipend was often a penny a day, equivalent to £1 10s. 4d. a year. With rent-free accommodation, it has been argued that in the fifteenth century this amount would have been adequate but not over-generous, sufficient perhaps to provide a 'decent but sparse living'.[90] The 1495 statutes of St John's Hospital in Lichfield specified that each almsperson was to receive seven pence (7d.) a week, 'with which seven-pence, thus weekly paid, the poor men are to remain contented, nor must they presume to beg'.[91] The assumption here is that seven pence should be a sufficient sum for an almsman to live on, with no necessity to supplement his income by begging. The twelve almsmen at God's House at Ewelme, Oxfordshire, founded in 1437 by the Earl and Countess of Suffolk, received two pence a day, but this was a particularly well-endowed and high status

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[89] Felicity Heal, 'The idea of hospitality in early modern England', *Past and Present,* no. 102 (1984), p. 68.
[90] Christopher Dyer, *Standards of living in the later middle ages. Social change in England, c. 1200 – 1520* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 253. More recently, Dyer has judged this amount 'was enough to provide an individual with a more than adequate daily diet, including some meat and fish'. C. Dyer, 'Poverty and its relief in late medieval England', *Past and Present,* vol. 216 (2012), p. 65.
[91] HCPP no. 7 (1822), p. 388.

establishment, where the almsmen had to undertake an onerous daily regime of prayer.[92] Indeed, the wealth and status of the founder of the almshouse often dictated the amount of the almsperson's stipend. The London grocer Lawrence Sherriff, who founded an almshouse in 1567 for poor men in his home town of Rugby, Warwickshire, specified the traditional allowance of seven pence a week for his almsmen; while in 1571 Thomas Oken, mercer and local burgess, gave the occupants of his almshouse in Warwick even less, at only four shillings (4s.) a year. In contrast, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, also founded an almshouse that year in Warwick, but his was a much wealthier foundation, as befitted his status as one of the leading peers of the realm and the Queen's confidant. His almsmen received four pounds (£4) a year each in stipend, together with a share in the dividends from the rents of almshouse property.[93]

A particularly nice example of a founder using the stipend to indicate the status he ascribed to his establishment, is provided by Bishop John Cosin in the second half of the seventeenth century. Cosin was appointed Bishop of Durham on the restoration of Charles II in 1660. The bishopric was one of the most powerful in the land, where the Prince Bishops exercised temporal as well as ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the County Palatine. Cosin founded two almshouses near his palaces, one for two men and two women in Bishop Auckland in 1662, and a larger one for eight in the cathedral city of Durham in 1666. The four Bishop Auckland almspeople received stipends of £4 a year each, plus cloaks worth £3 6s. 8d. every three years. The eight

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[92] Goodall, *God's House*, pp. 231-7.

[93] Rouse, *Rugby School,* p. 24; Paul Bolitho, *Warwick's Most Famous Son. The Story of Thomas Oken and his Charity* (Warwick, 2003), p. 19; WRO CR1600/31 'The House Book'; Tibbits, 'Hospital', p. 128.

men and women in the Durham almshouse, however, received £6 13s. 4d. annually, and cloaks or gowns worth £5 every three years, together with 15s. of fuel. This was considerably more than the stipends at other late seventeenth-century foundations in county Durham. For instance, George Lilburne's almshouse in Houghton-le-Spring (also founded in 1666) gave £3 6s. 8d. a year; William Hutchinson of Romaldkirk gave £2 a year in 1674; and Sir John Duck's almshouse established in 1685 at Great Lumley gave each of the twelve almspeople £3 8s. 8d. a year.[94]

Bishop Cosin's Durham stipend of £6 13s. 4d. is not only a very generous but also a very *precise* amount, and matches exactly the amount received by the King's almsmen (or bedesmen) at Durham Cathedral.[95] These royal appointments had been instituted by Henry VIII at the refounding of a number of monastic institutions as secular cathedrals after the dissolution of the monasteries.[96] They were the 'official' poor, eight poor men nominated by the king who attended cathedral services and undertook simple duties in the cathedral church in return for a quarterly pension. Often they were disabled soldiers or sailors who had served the king. In his instructions regarding his own almspeople, Cosin directed that they too must attend services twice daily, processing two by two into the cathedral, and sitting in precise positions, the men 'placing themselves in ye Quire two on the south side and two on the north next and below the Almesmen of the Cathedrall Church, and the women likewise placing themselves on the upper

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[94] DRO EP/Au SA12/39(3); DRO DU/6/1/9(3); Humphrey Simpson (ed.), 'Antiquities of Sunderland and its vicinity', *Sunderland Antiquarian Society*, vol. XXII (Sunderland, 1960), p. 124; DRO EP/Rom 12/2 p. 4; DRO DU 6/1/9(6).

[95] DULSC DCD/L/BB Cathedral Treasurer's Books.

[96] I. Atherton, E. McGrath, A. Tomkins, '"Pressed down by want and afflicted with poverty, wounded and maimed in war or worn down with age?" Cathedral Almsmen in England 1538 – 1914', in A. Borsay & P. Shapely (eds), *Medicine, Charity and Mutual Aid. The Consumption of Health and Welfare in Britain, c. 1550 - 1950* (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 11-34.

part of the Benches before the Gentlewomens Seats'.[97] These seating arrangements indicate the respect which Cosin expected his almspeople to be accorded.

In Warwickshire in the late seventeenth century there was a similar contrast, as there had been in the sixteenth, between establishments founded by people of very different rank and wealth. Lady Katherine Leveson, grand-daughter of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, founded her almshouse for twenty poor women in Temple Balsall in 1671. Her stipends, at £8 a year, were exceptionally generous.[98] But the small almshouses founded in Alcester by the lawyer John Bridges and his brother-in-law George Ingram in 1659 and 1680 paid no stipends at all until 1702, when John's son Brooke Bridges endowed both almshouses with stipends of £2 a year each.[99] The greatest contrasts, however, were to be found in Kent, where many small almshouses paid no stipend at all, and, of those that did, the amounts ranged from 13s. 4d. a year at Linton Park almshouses (founded in 1610) to £6 13s. 4d. a year at Anthony Honywood's almshouses in Lenham (1622), while the residents of Charles Amherst's almshouses at Pembury were apparently receiving £12 a year in 1702.[100] Such contrasts in the value of stipends were common, and occur across the country.[101] Jordan, for instance, remarks on the disparity of stipends in the counties he examined, with his Buckinghamshire examples ranging widely 'from an

[97]DULSC MS/91 f. 170
[98] HCPP no. 18 (1828), p. 441.
[99] WRO CR2219/13 Codicil to Brooke Bridges' will.
[100] HCPP no. 30 (1837), pp. 360; 587; 505.
[101] See for instance, Caffrey, *West Riding,* p. 62.

almost impossible minimum of £1 p.a. each to the generous provision of … £7 10s.'[102]

According to Jordan, the average almshouse stipend for Buckinghamshire, which he describes as an averagely prosperous county, was £4 8s. 7d., which he rather optimistically suggests 'was sufficient to provide a maintenance probably not much less straitened than that of an agricultural labourer'.[103] Across the same period, he calculated that the average for London foundations was similar, at £4 4s. per annum.[104] But in Yorkshire he suggests the average was much lower, as was the range, from 10s. to £5 per annum. Only a third of the eighteen Yorkshire almshouses he mentions paid stipends of between £4 and £5 a year, and none paid more than this. The remaining twelve paid sums ranging from 10s. to £3 a year, and a further seven paid no stipends at all after the death of the founder. Jordan remarks that 'the life afforded in these institutions must, save for about a score of exceptions, have been hard and meagre'.[105] In Norfolk, he asserts that benefactors of almshouses in that county 'regarded £2 12s. p.a. as adequate maintenance for one almsperson who had his lodgings supplied'. Yet he does not discuss how this stipend might actually have been adequate, when it was so much lower than the Buckinghamshire average.[106]

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[102] Jordan, *Rural England,* p. 48.
[103] Ibid., pp. 24, 48-9. In contrast, Wrightson and Levine quote a labourer's pay in Terling, Essex, as 9d. a day (£11 4s. yearly) at the end of the sixteenth century, and 12d. a day (£15 12s. a year) at the end of the seventeenth, although these sums would have needed to support a family, and were dependent upon full time work being available. Sir Richard Newdigate paid full board plus amounts from £2 to £5 10s. a year for farm servants at Arbury, Warwickshire, at the end of the seventeenth century. Wrightson & Levine, *Terling*, pp. 40-1; Hindle, 'Work, Reward and Labour', p. 259.
[104] Jordan, *Charities of London*, p. 165.
[105] Jordan, *Rural England*, pp. 252-281.
[106] Ibid.*,* p. 129.

In fact, on examination of Jordan's figures, it appears that some of his assumptions are questionable, and that his estimate of the average stipend received is too high. He seems to have omitted Dorothy Dayrell's almshouse in Buckingham from the bottom of his range. This was founded in 1574 for six poor women, with an annual endowment of £5 4s. in total, which he claims would have given each almswoman, 'somewhat meagrely' (as he says earlier), 17s. 4d. a year, or 4d. a week.[107] In a number of other instances he assumes an artificially high stipend, derived from a notional return on the investment of the capital sum invested or bequeathed by the founder of the almshouse. For instance, he assumes that Thomas Wedon's endowment of property in 1624 for his almshouse in Chesham actually did produce the £30 a year in income that Wedon intended, and that this gave stipends of £7 10s. a year to each of the four occupants.[108] Even assuming that the capital did indeed produce the return he anticipated, this takes no account of any other expenditure such as administering the charity and keeping the almshouse in repair. These necessary costs would have reduced the income available to pay the almspeople's stipends, but Jordan ignores them. If Jordan's Buckinghamshire average is thus too high, an average which he implied would give an almsperson a standard of living not much less than an agricultural labourer, one must conclude that the standard of living experienced by the majority of almshouse occupants would have fallen far short of this. Jordan's methodology has been much criticised, principally for failing to take into account the steep rises in population, which doubled, and inflation, which increased five-fold, in England over the period

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[107] Ibid., p. 44.
[108] Ibid., p. 46.

he covers.[109] In particular, the rise in the cost of food, most marked in the years of dearth at the end of the sixteenth century, would have had severe implications for almshouse inhabitants, dependent as most of them were on their stipend for the purchase of food. In most almshouses, the price of food would have taken up the major proportion of an almsperson's stipend.

Jordan's attempt to average stipends across almost two centuries of price increases and inflation is, therefore, not helpful. It masks any ability to identify trends over time, for instance, to see whether stipends were greater in almshouses founded later in the period. Using the figures which Jordan himself quotes, the range of known stipends in Buckinghamshire before 1600 was from 17s. 4d. to £4 (three examples) while it was from £2 12s. to £7 10s. between 1600 and 1660 (six examples). As Jordan's methodology relied largely on wills, however, it also does not allow for subsequent attempts by trustees and those responsible for the management of almshouse endowments to increase stipends in line with inflation. There is some evidence that, where funds were available, this did happen. For instance, the city of Coventry which took over the assets and management of both Bond's Hospital (1507) and Ford's Hospital (1509) in the mid-sixteenth century, had raised the original stipends of 7½d. a week in each to two shillings a week at Ford's by 1636, and three shillings at Bond's in 1647.[110] At other almshouses, trustees might be hampered by the terminology of the founder's will or the way the almshouse was funded. If the exact amount of the stipend was specified in the founder's will, it could be difficult for trustees to change

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[109] See for instance, D.C. Coleman, 'Review: W.K. Jordan, Philanthropy in England', *Economic History Review*, Series 2 vol. 13 (1960 - 1), pp. 113-115; J.F. Hadwin, 'Deflating Philanthropy', *Economic History Review*, vol. 31 (1978), pp. 105-117.
[110] Cleary & Orton, *So long as the world*, pp. 54, 56.

this later. Where almshouses were not themselves endowed with land, a common method of providing permanent funding was for the benefactor to place a specific rent charge on lands bequeathed to their heirs to maintain their almshouse. The rent charge remained in perpetuity, to be paid by whoever subsequently owned the land, but, with inflation, declined in value over time, even though the value of the land increased. Either through inflation, or because of the abuse or misappropriation of almshouse funds, many almshouses were therefore impoverished within a few generations. This was a problem well understood by contemporaries, and as a result many almshouses received further endowments after their initial foundation.

The great benefit of the stipend, no matter how small, was that it was a guaranteed, regular payment. There might occasionally be abuse and misappropriation of almshouse funds, preventing almspeople receiving the intended allowance, sorry examples of which can be found in many diocesan visitations and in the investigations of the commissioners for charitable uses under the late Elizabethan legislation.[111] The case study in chapter 6, for instance, details the successful suit in chancery by the parishioners of Leamington Hastings against the heirs of Humphrey Davis, founder of the almshouse there, after they had allegedly misappropriated the almshouse income. The occupants of St Stephen's Hospital, Hackington, complained at a visitation by the mayor of Canterbury in 1625 that they had not received their allowances in wood and money, and the complaints were repeated in subsequent years. It seems that the lands given by Sir Roger Manwood to support the almshouse had been sold by his son, and the mayor of Canterbury eventually had to distrain the goods of the new owner to force

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[111] 39 Eliz. c. 6; 43 Eliz. c. 4.

him to pay the almshouse occupants their stipends.[112] Sometimes financial problems prevented the almshouse trustees from paying the full amount of the stipend, as in 1696 when labourer William Chittam was admitted to the Leamington Hastings almshouse on a reduced stipend until the trustees could raise more revenue by revaluing their leases and increasing rental income.[113]

In some almshouses, receipt of the whole stipend might be dependent on good behaviour. Occasionally almshouse occupants were fined or had some of their allowance withheld for misdemeanours or breaches of almshouse rules, where they existed.   As the previous chapter demonstrated, however, an almsperson was not readily deprived of their stipend once it had been awarded. Neither would they normally be expected to have to demonstrate their continuing need for their place once they had passed the admission criteria and started to receive the stipend. This was very different from the recipients of parish relief, who often had the amounts they received reduced or terminated on the basis of the overseer of the poor's assessment of their circumstances. The almshouse stipend was a fixed amount, not based on an individual's needs, and usually all the occupants of the almshouse received the same stipend, regardless of their individual circumstances. There were occasionally differential rates for men and women within the same establishment, as at Thomas Stafford's almshouse in Shenley, Buckinghamshire, built in 1615, where the four men were to receive 3d. a day, and the two women only 2d. a day each; and Sir John Constable's almshouse in Halsham, Yorkshire, where the men's

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[112] CCA CC S/7/1 St Stephens Hospital Memorandum and Disbursements Book 1593 – 1828.
[113] WRO DR43a/195 Davis/Wheler Charity 20 October 1696.

stipends were £4 a year, and the women's £2 a year; but these are rare examples.[114] Sometimes one or two of the almspeople received additional payments for undertaking certain duties, such as reading the prayers or nursing older residents. Sir Thomas Hesketh's almshouse in Heslington, Yorkshire (1605), for example, provided accommodation for nine poor people on stipends of £5 a year, but one of the almsmen was paid £6 13s. 4d. a year. He was designated Master, and his duties were to read prayers each morning and evening.[115]   At his hospital in Guildford, George Abbot, Archbishop of Canterbury, specified in 1617 that there should be two nurses, called 'Releevers of the Impotent', to be appointed annually from among the almswomen. They were to receive an additional 6s. 8d. yearly on top of their stipend.[116] Apart from exceptions such as these, most almspeople could rely on receiving the same unchanging stipend until they died.

This guaranteed, regular payment of a monetary allowance gave an almsperson not only considerable security in an age when most poor people's lives were characterised by chronic insecurity; it also provided a degree of autonomy and independence. An almsperson was able to choose what to spend their allowance on, unlike the recipients of parish poor relief who were often relieved in kind, and had no choice but to accept what was provided for them. This is representative of the essential ambiguity of almshouses; they were institutions that, despite being founded and run for economically dependent recipients of charity, seem designed to foster autonomy and independence. On the other hand, they also lacked the flexibility and sensitivity to changing needs that characterised the parish poor

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[114] Jordan, *Rural England,* pp. 46, 263.
[115] Ibid*.,* p. 266.
[116] Taylor, *Abbot's Hospital,* p. 25.

relief system. The recipients of fixed pensions and allowances fared badly in times of high inflation, fluctuating prices and food shortages. In years of high demand for poor relief, the overseers of the poor could raise an additional levy on the parish to meet demand. Parish officials and local justices could, and on occasions did, show enormous sensitivity to individual needs and circumstances when exercising their responsibilities; fine tuning what was provided on a week by week basis to the needs of individuals, withdrawing support when people were able to provide a little for themselves, stepping back in to fill the gaps in times of difficulty. Evidence from overseers' accounts across the country shows parishes paying for shoes and clothing, sheets and blankets, redeeming people's goods from pawn, providing extra help when people were sick, paying for medical attention and special diets, and finally meeting burial costs, even including food and drink at the wake.[117] In contrast, most almshouses provided a set stipend, regardless of individual circumstance. When additional benefits such as clothing and fuel were provided, these were also prescribed and invariable.

Some almshouses provided gowns or cloaks for their residents. Clothing was both essential and expensive, and represented a valuable asset for poor people, many of whom relied on handed-down gifts or second hand garments to clothe themselves. It was common for parishes to provide clothing for those on poor relief. The poor needed to be 'neat, clean and respectable', as rags were considered a mark of degradation.[118] But unlike the parish authorities, who paid for shoes, shirts, petticoats and shifts for

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[117] Hindle, *On the Parish?* pp. 265-271*.*
[118] Christiana Payne, 'Murillo-like Rags or Clean Pinafores?: Artistic and Social Preferences in the Representation of the Dress of the Rural Poor', *Textile History,* vol. 33 (1), 2002, pp. 48-9.

adults, and would typically provide a complete suit of clothes for poor children being apprenticed, almshouses generally only provided a single, outer garment. There are occasional exceptions. The trustees of Humphrey Davis's almshouse in Leamington Hastings paid 2s. 6d. for a pair of shoes for Ann Tue in 1686.[119] Before her admission to the almshouse she had been on parish poor relief, and the purchase and repair of shoes for her appeared regularly in the parish overseers' accounts; it is possible that she was crippled in some way, and needed special shoes on a frequent basis. Sir Roger Manwood specified that his six almspeople should each have a gown, cap and shoes every three years.[120] The almswomen of Lady Leveson's Hospital in Temple Balsall appear to have been provided with some form of undergarment and stays as well as their expensive 'fine gray' gowns. The hospital accounts itemise expenditure on 'canvies' (fine, unbleached cloth), and on 'whalesbone, clasps and keepers' costing about 3s. 6d.[121] Perhaps elsewhere it was assumed that older people entering almshouses would already possess sufficient clothing of their own. Botelho's evidence from Cratfield, Suffolk, suggests that older people were far less likely than other paupers to be provided with clothing by the overseers, although in the eighteenth century, at least, Styles believes that the emphasis in overseers' accounts on providing shirts, shifts, stockings and shoes suggests that these were garments which poor people needed to replace regularly.[122] Most almshouses seem to have been unconcerned about the possibly impoverished state of residents' undergarments. The outer garment, when

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[119] WRO DRO43A/195 Accounts for 1686.
[120] CCA CC Supp Ms/6 Alderman Gray's Notebook, p. 242.
[121] WRO CR1618/W15/17/7, 9, 31-32, Hospital accounts 1689 - 90.
[122] Botelho, *Old Age*, p. 119; John Styles, *The Dress of the People. Everyday fashion in eighteenth-century England* (New Haven & London, 2007), pp. 264-5.

provided, undoubtedly served to keep the almsperson warm, but, perhaps more importantly, it provided the wearer with a literal cloak of respectability.

Often the colour and form of the almshouse gown was specified, with distinguishing features such as a badge or the founder's initials. Thus Thomas Oken's almshouse in Warwick provided a gown every three years, made of six yards of black cloth with the letters TO in white, front and back.[123] It was common for almshouses which provided gowns or cloaks to allow for replacement only every two or three years; poor people would usually have replaced their outer garments only very intermittently.[124] The much wealthier Lord Leycester Hospital provided the brethren with new gowns twice a year, a blue gown on St George's Day (23 April) and a black gown at All Hallows (1 November), which probably served as summer and winter wear. The Lord Leycester's gowns are referred to in the hospital statutes as livery, and the men had to wear them in public.[125] In the mid-seventeenth century, silver badges with Leycester's arms of the bear and ragged staff were introduced, which each man had to purchase from his predecessor.[126] The status which these expensive badges conferred marked out the wearers as privileged dependents. As Styles remarks, 'dependency was not necessarily synonymous with humiliation. Liveries were born with pride; badges could be sought after signs of patronage, belonging and entitlement'.[127] Yet the similar introduction of badges for the recipients of parish poor relief at the end of the seventeenth century, while marking the

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[123] WRO CR2758/1.

[124] Styles, *Dress*, p. 217.

[125] WRO CR1600/2, Founder's Statutes, no. 18. 'Item that noe brother goe into the Towne without his lyverye on his Backe'.

[126] WRO CR1618/WA17/102 Book of admissions, compiled by William Walton, Senior Steward, in 1868. In a note Walton says that the names of the men engraved on the badges were all brethren of the hospital in 1663.

[127] Styles, *Dress*, p. 272.

wearers as deserving, was also intended to stigmatise the recipients of poor relief.[128] The occurrence in almshouse rules of sometimes draconian penalties for those refusing to wear the gowns provided, suggests that not all almshouse occupants acquiesced willingly in this demonstration of their dependence. The women of Lady Leveson's Hospital, for instance, were instructed by the founder to wear their distinctive grey gowns at all times; anyone refusing to do so should lose their allowance and be 'put forth of the said House'.[129]

The other essential was fuel. Individual fireplaces, provided in most almshouses, were used both for warmth and cooking. Fuel was expensive, particularly where there was no access to firewood, either because of urbanisation and enclosure of commons, or because the almspeople were too frail to go out collecting firewood themselves. Many almshouse charities specified an allowance of coal or wood or both to be delivered each winter. For instance, Sir Thomas Holte's will of 1637 included 'a wain load of coals' for each occupant of the almshouses he founded at the gates of Aston Hall. Some almshouses had a fuel supply from their own lands, for instance Jesus Hospital, Canterbury, and Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Greenwich, where William Lambarde had purchased a wood specifically to provide fuel for his almspeople.[130] The tenants of the lands owned by Leamington Hastings almshouse paid some of their rent in fuel delivered to the almshouse, but in 1696, as they were 'apt to bee slack in bringing coals and wood as they ought', the trustees made the decision that in future the whole rent would be

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[128] 8 & 9 William III c. 30 (1697); Styles, *Dress*, p. 274; Steve Hindle, 'Dependency, Shame and Belonging: Badging the Deserving Poor, c.1550 – 1750', *Cultural History,* vol. 1 (2004), pp. 29-58.
[129] WRO CR1540/6 Transcript of the Will of Lady Katherine Leveson (1671).
[130] HCPP no. 29 (1835), p. 1005; CCA U204/F1/1 Jesus Hospital Ledger 1610 – 1637, entry for Lady Day 1611; Warnicke, *William Lambarde,* p. 44.

in money, so that fuel could be purchased at the 'proper seasons'.[131] The inhabitants of the Cowden almshouse in Kent received a free delivery of one hundred faggots of wood each November.[132] Sometimes the value of the fuel was specified, as in the 5s. in coals provided annually at Hutchinson's almshouse at Romaldkirk (founded 1674) and Morgan's almshouse at Frosterley (1641), both in County Durham. According to Jordan, Robert Butler's will of 1630 gave 3s. 4d. in winter to each of his four almswomen at Walpole St Peters, Norfolk, to purchase 'a chaldron of good sea coal'.[133] It is unlikely that these quantities would have enabled an almsperson to keep in a fire all winter, but they should nonetheless be seen as valuable contributions to their fuel needs. At Bishop Cosin's almshouse in Durham (1666) the almspeople each received a far more generous 15s. in coals. It seems that the disparity in the status of the residents of various almshouses was demonstrated even by how warm they were able to keep themselves in winter.

Some almshouses were provided with garden plots, with the expectation that the almspeople, like poor cottagers, could provide themselves with vegetables and fruit. This would have been a useful addition to the standard of living for those almspeople still fit enough for garden work, or residents of the wealthier almshouses like the Lord Leycester which could afford to employ assistance. Even in the towns, gardens and vegetable plots were common, and provided an important supplement to the diets of those poorer people who had access to them. Other elements which could improve

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[131] WRO DRO43A/195 20 October 1696.
[132] Barker-Read, 'Aged poor', p. 90. A faggot was a bundle of wood. Barker-Read gives the dimensions as between three and four feet long and twenty-four inches in girth.
[133] Jordan, *Rural England,* p. 127.

the quality of life for poor older people such as the provision of nursing and domestic assistance seem to have been the preserve of the better off establishments such as Abbot's and the Lord Leycester. In less well-off almshouses, residents needing assistance would have had to rely principally on family and neighbours, as other poor people did. When the trustees of Leamington Hastings almshouse agreed to admit Widow Scotton in 1687, they gave permission for her daughter to be admitted with her. Widow Over, on her admission in 1696, asked for a particular room next to that of her brother-in-law Richard Over, so that they 'may bee helpful to each other'.[134]

These wide ranging examples, just a handful of the many which could have been cited, demonstrate how difficult it is to arrive at any notion of an 'average' almshouse allowance, despite Jordan's pretension to statistical precision. The variations in the nature, range and value of benefits received are just too great. Quite apart from the wide range of stipends paid, some almshouses provided clothing or fuel, of different value; a very few provided food, bedding, or nursing care. Unlike the parish pension, none of this seems to be based on the objective needs of the individual recipient, but on what the founders or trustees of almshouses could afford to provide or thought was adequate for the objects of their charity. On the whole this does not seem to have been affected by the gender of the intended recipients. While some of the wealthier foundations were for men only, such as the Lord Leycester Hospital, other high-status establishments such as Abbot's Hospital and Bishop Cosin's almshouse admitted both men and women. One of the most generous foundations in Warwickshire, Lady Leveson's Hospital in Temple Balsall, was for women only.

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[134] WRO DR43a/195.

There is, however, some suggestion of regional variation in the level and value of stipends. Steven King identified a broad, regional difference in the level of payments of poor relief in eighteenth-century England, with lower payments in the north and west of the country than in the south and east, notwithstanding individual variations between parishes. He attributed this to cultural differences in attitudes to the poor, with a more ingrained culture of independence and 'making do' amongst the poor in the north and west, and harsher attitudes exhibited by overseers and magistrates towards them; and conversely, a greater acceptance of dependence on the part of the poor in the south and east, and a greater generosity and readiness to give relief by the poor law authorities in those areas.[135] It is possible, if such differences did exist, that they might have affected attitudes to charitable giving as well. But the picture may be more complicated than King's analysis would suggest. For instance, a more 'generous' culture of parish poor relief might have been mirrored in greater generosity in charitable giving; but conversely might, as contemporary commentators feared, have reduced donors' willingness to donate to charity because of the existence of parish poor rates. Some variation might be accounted for by local differences in the cost of living, particularly in the price and availability of food, but also in the availability of alternative resources. This would have affected not only the purchasing power of the almshouse stipend, but also local wage rates, impacting on what almshouses would need to expend on service charges and repair costs, and local land rents, affecting almshouse income. Recent work by Craig Muldrew on food prices, preferences and availability; the relationship between calorific intake and productivity; and the implications of

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[135] King, *Poverty and Welfare*.

this for economic development, has highlighted just how complex an area this is.[136] It is clear that the cost of living varied considerably around the country, sometimes even between villages in the same area, and was affected by patterns of food production, by custom, and also by what Muldrew terms 'non-monetary components', such as land tenure and common rights.[137] For example, Tim Wales has shown how the villagers of Cawston in Norfolk who had a cow or a cottage were described in 1601 as 'not so poor'.[138] Cawston was a village with extensive commons, providing grazing and fuel for free; the land attached to a cottage would have enabled poor cottagers to grow food for their own consumption and even a surplus to sell, while dairy produce from the cow could also be sold to enhance the family's income. The erosion of common rights elsewhere throughout the early modern period had a significant impact on the standard of living of poor people. Having to pay to rent pasture for a cow, for instance, could make it uneconomical to own one.[139] The result is a series of complicated scenarios in which many factors could impact upon the cost of living for poor people.

The standard of living of almshouse residents

If the cost of living varied so greatly around the country, it is difficult to assess what standard of living the equally varied almshouse stipends and benefits documented above might have enabled their residents to achieve. Although this complex picture makes a nonsense of Jordan's 'average' almshouse stipend, the temptation to simplify is hard to resist if some broad-brush comparisons are to be made. Appendix 5.3 gives the stipends, where

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[136] Craig Muldrew, *Food, Energy and the Creation of Industriousness. Work and Material Culture in Agrarian England, 1550 – 1780* (Cambridge, 2011).
[137] Ibid., p. 323.
[138] Wales, 'Life-cycle', pp. 371-2.
[139] Muldrew, *Food, Energy*, pp. 253-5.

known, of almshouses in six English counties between 1550 and 1700: the three counties of Durham, Warwick and Kent, supplemented by information up to the 1660s from Jordan's work on wills in Buckinghamshire, Norfolk and Yorkshire. The almshouses are listed by date of foundation in three separate tables: from the 1550s to the 1590s; 1600s to 1640s; and 1650s to 1690s. The stipend paid at the time of foundation, if this is known, is included, arranged by decade. In a few instances, where different stipends are known to have been paid at a later date, these are included again under the relevant decade.

The data is, of course, incomplete. For approximately half the establishments identified by Jordan no precise stipend is known, and these have had to be excluded. Similarly, for approximately one third of Kent almshouses, and a few in Warwickshire and Durham, no information on stipends is available. Also, in very few cases is information from individual almshouses available at more than one point in time. The evidence from wills collected by Jordan only indicates the founder's intentions; whether or not these were actually carried out is not always known. Again, many almshouse charities may have been able to adjust stipends over time to take into account changes in the cost of living, but many others paid the same fixed stipend for more than a century. How establishments fared over time was often a matter of chance. Some prospered, such as the Lord Leycester Hospital in Warwick. By the end of the seventeenth century this wealthy almshouse was reputed to be providing each brother with a share of the dividends worth more than £50 a year.[140] Many establishments attracted further endowments. Others will have declined, either through neglect,

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[140] Tibbits, 'Hospital', pp. 137-8.

abuse, or because the income to maintain the almshouse was fixed, perhaps by a rent charge on property.[141] Many of the allowances paid to almspeople were set down in the founder's will, and could not be varied. The impoverishment of many almshouses over time is evidenced by the comprehensive reports of the Brougham commissioners into charities in the 1820s and 1830s.

Particularly in the earlier part of the period covered, inflation was rapid, and any consideration of the standard of living achieved by almshouse occupants must take this into account. The index devised by Phelps Brown and Hopkins, based on the prices of a number of consumables such as food, fuel and cloth, allows historians to track inflation across any given period.[142] Appendix 5.1 reproduces Lynn Botelho's summary index by decade, from the 1500s to 1690s, of the price of a composite unit of foodstuffs.[143] Using this index, it is possible to apply a number of benchmarks with which to compare almshouse stipends over time. The earliest benchmark is the traditional 1d. a day almshouse stipend of the late medieval period. This was considered an adequate, if basic, allowance and was still being specified in early sixteenth-century foundations, such as Sir Robert Throckmorton's almshouse at Coughton, Warwickshire, in 1518. Table 5.2 shows how rapidly the value of this stipend was eroded by sixteenth-century inflation. The figures in the bottom row of the table indicate the sum that would be needed in each

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[141] For example, Davenport and Lilburne's separate endowments of £10 per annum at their almshouse in Houghton-le-Spring, county Durham, had remained fixed, necessitating further endowments by later benefactors to maintain the income of the occupants. By the nineteenth century the bequests of subsequent rectors of Houghton had increased the stipends for the three occupants of Davenport's wing to £15 13s. 4d. per annum, while fewer additional endowments had left the three in Lilburne's wing with a much lower £9 6s. 8d. DRO EP/Ho 280.

[142] Henry Phelps Brown & Sheila V. Hopkins, *A Perspective of Wages and Prices* (London & New York, 1981), pp. 13-59.

[143] Botelho, *Old Age*, p. 144.

decade to match the value of the traditional almsman's pension at the beginning of the century.

Table 5.2 Traditional almsman's stipend (1d. a day) increased in line with inflation							
	1500s	**1540s**	**1550s**	**1560s**	**1570s**	**1580s**	**1590s**
Inflation index	106	217	315	298	341	389	530
Almsman's stipend of 1d. a day	£1.10s.4d.	£3.2s.2d.	£4.10s.4d.	£4. 5s.5d.	£4.17s.8d.	£5.11s.6d.	£7.12s.0d.

Thus, when Lawrence Sherriff's will gave his almsmen in Rugby the traditional stipend of 1d. a day (£1 10s. 4d. a year) in 1567, the almsmen would have actually needed a stipend of £4 5s. 5d. a year by then if it were to match the value of the late medieval almsman's stipend. Sherriff, as a grocer, is unlikely to have been ignorant of the change in the value of money over his lifetime; it seems he was more concerned with upholding tradition than with genuinely meeting the needs of his poor men. By comparison with the stipends of other almshouses founded in the second half of the sixteenth century (Appendix 5.3), it can be seen that, apart from places like the medieval hospitals of Sherburn and Greatham where full board was provided on top of the small stipend, only three almshouse foundations come close to matching the standard of living afforded to late medieval almspeople. These were the almshouse founded in 1556 by Robert Holgate, Archbishop of York, in his home town of Hemsworth, Yorkshire, with stipends of £4 per annum; William Lambe's almshouse at Sutton Valence, Kent, founded in 1574, providing the almspeople with £4 a year and half a chaldron of coal; and the Lord Leycester Hospital, Warwick, founded by Robert Dudley, Earl of

Leicester, in 1571, also with stipends of £4 per annum, but where the almsmen also received two gowns a year, fuel, and a share of the rental dividends. Two of these were exceptionally wealthy foundations created by high status individuals, and not typical of the generality of almshouse foundations. Lambe's almshouse was administered by the Clothworkers' Company, which he had endowed with considerable London property. They may have been able to pay such generous stipends because Lambe's original intentions were changed when the number of almspeople was reduced from twelve to six.[144]

More interestingly, this comparison suggests that late medieval almspeople were the exceptionally privileged poor, and that later generations had lower expectations of what was considered appropriate for poor recipients of charity. Some evidence in support of this conclusion is provided by the town corporations of Stratford-upon-Avon and Gloucester. When they took over responsibility in the mid-sixteenth century for town almshouses formerly run by suppressed organisations, the Guild of the Holy Cross in Stratford and St Bartholomew's Hospital in Gloucester respectively, they reduced the 1d. a day allowance paid to the almspeople. Instead of receiving 7d. a week, their almspeople now received only 4d. a week.[145] While financial difficulties and the need for retrenchment probably drove these decisions, they may also reflect a change in assumptions about what was an appropriate standard of living for occupants of almshouses, once they had lost their intercessory function.

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[144] Prescott, *English Medieval Hospital*, p. 137.
[145] R. Savage (ed.), 'Minutes and Accounts of the Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon and other records 1553 -1620, Vol. I, 1553 - 1566', *Dugdale Society*, vol. I (Oxford, 1921), p. 151; Prescott , *English Medieval Hospital*, p. 76.

Another sixteenth-century benchmark can be provided by the pensions paid by the government to monks from the dissolved monasteries in the 1540s, and later to chantry and college priests. These ranged from £1 6s. 8d. a year to over £20 a year for a lucky few, with £5 considered 'a reasonable sum upon which a person in retirement might live'.[146] While there is no suggestion that ejected monks were expected to be poor, and the offer of adequate pensions in compensation no doubt eased the progress of the Dissolution, the sums were clearly designed to enable a single man without dependents to live reasonably well, with two thirds of men receiving payments of at least £5 a year. This is in marked contrast to the female ex-religious, sixty per cent of whom received less than £2 a year. Former monks would have needed to pay rent, whereas almsmen would not. Even with rent taken into account, the sum of £5 in the 1540s is more than the equivalent of the traditional almsman's pay. The monk's pension remained at the same level for the remainder of his life unless he could augment it with new employment as a priest, and elderly monks living into the later years of the century would have found their circumstances much reduced.[147] Even so, only the most fortunate almshouse occupants could match £5 a year in the late sixteenth century.

An alternative comparative measure would be a notional budget requirement for an almsperson, based on assumed minimum subsistence needs and adjusted for inflation. Several historians have attempted to devise a minimum subsistence budget for poor people: Ian Archer for Elizabethan London; Wrightson and Levine for Terling in Essex at the end of the

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[146] G.A.J. Hodgett (ed.), 'The State of the Ex-religious and Former Chantry Priests in the Diocese of Lincoln 1547 – 1574', *Lincoln Record Society*, vol. 53 (1959), p. xvii.
[147] Ibid.

seventeenth century; and Lynn Botelho for late-seventeenth-century Suffolk.[148] All these are in the south-east of England, where the cost of living might have been higher than in other parts of the country; unfortunately comparative data is less readily available elsewhere.[149] The components of a poor person's budget would have comprised food, clothing, fuel and rent. The equivalent budget for an almsperson would include food, some clothing, and fuel if not provided. Food would inevitably have been the most important component.

Ian Archer devised two budgets for a non-working widow without dependents in late sixteenth-century London, Budget 'A', either standard or 'saver'. The food element in Archer's standard budget is based on the diet allowances of the Westminster house of correction in 1561 and the London Bridewell in 1600, together with the assessment of the York authorities in 1587 that the poor needed a minimum of 1½ d. a day to live. The 'saver' budget assumes that in times of hardship it would be possible (and necessary) for a poor person to economise on food, cutting out meat and dairy products, reducing the budget by 25 per cent. The reduced sums Archer includes for food on this basis are £1 8s. 6d. per annum in the mid-1580s, rising to £2 5s. 9d. in the late 1590s. The same 25 per cent reduction could, Archer argues, be applied to other components of the poor person's budget. He includes the sum of 14s. for clothing in his standard budget, based on the cost of providing a man with a gown, shirt and shoes in the 1590s, but acknowledges that we do not know how often this clothing would need to be replaced. Styles suggests for the eighteenth century that shirts,

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[148] Archer, *Stability,* p. 194; Wrightson & Levine*, Terling*, p. 40; Botelho, *Old Age*, p. 148.
[149] The data used by Phelps Brown and Hopkins was also mainly from south east England, so comparisons with other parts of the country may be less valid.

shifts and shoes were likely to need replacing frequently, but that replacement of outer garments would be intermittent.[150] Archer reduces the 14s. for clothing by 25 per cent for the 'saver' budget, on the basis that the poor could have reduced their expenditure on clothing by buying second-hand, leaving an annual sum of 10s. 6d. for clothing in the 1580s and 1590s. The 9s. Archer allows for fuel in the 1580s, inflated to 12s. in the 1590s, is based on the cost of the fuel allowance of a heaped bushel of coal a week to each of the beneficiaries in John Costyn's will, and the 12s. paid by the Merchant Tailors company in the 1590s to each of the inhabitants of their new almshouses. A reduction of 25 per cent could be achieved, Archer believes, by purchasing subsidised fuel from the London authorities. The rent element can, of course, be excluded for the purpose of comparing with an almsperson's needs, as they received rent-free accommodation. Archer's resulting subsistence budgets for a widow without dependents, excluding rent, total £2 6s. 6d. per year in the mid-1580s, and £3 5s. 3d. in the late 1590s.[151]

Wrightson and Levine arrived at the sum of £2 12s. a year for an adult's food and drink in the late seventeenth century, based on sums actually paid by the overseers of the poor for the parish of Terling in the last six years of the seventeenth century. Their assumption was that the typical poor relief payment of 2s. a fortnight to an adult pauper (£2 12s. per annum) covered the total cost of their food and drink. Their figures are based on the needs of an adult in a family with children, and therefore presumably applied to working-age men and women. Botelho calculated her budget for an aged

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[150] Styles, *Dress*, pp. 264-5.
[151] Archer, *Stability*, pp. 190-4.

person in late seventeenth-century Suffolk, and allowed £3 a year for food and drink, or 2d. a day. This seems generous compared with the Terling budget, as the calorific needs of an older person would be less than those of a working adult, but perhaps Botelho takes into account the economy of scale achieved in feeding a family of five.

With regard to clothing, Wrightson and Levine calculated that the costs of a full set of clothing for an adult in the late seventeenth century would have been 15s. for a woman or 18s. for a man, but that they would have been replaced only once every three years.[152] The Tonbridge workhouse in Kent provided each male inmate in the mid-eighteenth century with a coat, jacket, waistcoat, hat, shoes, two shirts and two pairs of socks. The women received a gown, several caps, a waistcoat, shoes, cloak, kerchief, two petticoats, two shifts and two pairs of stockings. Each complete outfit cost around £1 and was to be replaced after three years.[153] Botelho includes 10s. per year for clothing an aged poor person, though this, too, seems a little high. Her evidence from Poslingford confirms that the overseers would pay 15s. to fit out a female pauper with a gown, linen, stockings and shoes, but she suggests that clothing would be frequently repaired rather than replaced.[154] Both Botelho and Wrightson and Levine include the sum of £1 a year for fuel. Botelho acknowledges that fuel costs could vary widely. Wood to the value of 10s. was distributed each winter to the poor in Poslingford, whereas Cratfield's poor had their fuel supplied cheaply from the town lands. In Terling, the overseers spent about £1 a year on firewood for each pauper. Given the needs of the elderly for warmth and

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[152] Wrightson & Levine , *Terling*, p. 40.
[153] Barker-Read, 'Aged poor', p. 96.
[154] Botelho, *Old Age*, p. 147.

their limited ability to fetch wood for themselves, £1 to cover fuel for a year seems reasonable.

Table 5.3 summarises these estimated budgets for a single poor person without dependents. The first two columns, for the 1580s and 1590s, are derived from Archer's 'saver' budget; the third column, for the 1690s, is Botelho's budget for the aged poor; while the last column is derived from Wrightson and Levine's figures from Terling overseers' accounts.

Table 5.3 Budget for single poor person without dependents				
	1580s (Archer)	**1590s** (Archer)	**1690s** (Botelho)	**1690s** (W & L)
Food	£1 8s. 6d.	£2 5s. 9d.	£3 0s. 0d.	£2 12s. 0d.
Clothing	10s. 6d.	10s. 6d.	10s. 0d.	5s. 0d.
Fuel	7s. 6d.	9s. 0d.	£1 0s. 0d.	£1 0s. 0d.
Rent	10s. 0d.	10s. 0d.	£1 0s. 0d.	£1 0s. 0d.
Total	**£2 16s. 6d.**	**£3 15s. 3d.**	**£5 10s. 0d.**	**£4 17s. 0d.**

Source: Archer(1991), p. 194; Botelho (2004), p. 148; Wrightson & Levine (1995), p. 40.

Table 5.4 adapts these estimates to construct suggestive minimum subsistence budgets for an almsperson in south-east England. These reduce the clothing element of both Archer's and Botelho's budgets, on the basis that clothing was the area where economising would be easiest for an older person. They retain the original fuel costs in Archer's budgets, without the 25 per cent 'saver' reduction, as his means of reduction only applies in London. Wrightson and Levine agree with Botelho on fuel costs of £1 a year in the late seventeenth century. An almsperson's requirement would have been

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similar, as most poor households of any size would usually have had only a single hearth, and the older person's need to keep warm would have been greater. The food element for the 1690s budget is based on Wrightson and Levine, rather than Botelho, as there appears to be no rationale for the higher figure Botelho includes. The resulting figures are:

Table 5.4 Suggested subsistence budget for an almsperson			
	1580s	**1590s**	**1690s**
Food	£1 8s. 6d.	£2 5s. 9d.	£2 12s. 0d.
Clothing	5s. 0d.	5s. 0d.	5s. 0d.
Fuel	9s. 0d.	12s. 0d.	£1 0s. 0d.
Rent	free	free	free
Total	**£2 2s. 6d.**	**£3 2s. 9d.**	**£3 17s. 0d.**

These sums are all highly tentative estimates, of course, but, adjusted for inflation, might be used to compare with the almshouse stipends of the six English counties in Appendix 5.3. The first line of the tables in that appendix reproduces Botelho's inflation index from Appendix 5.1, while the line below gives the 1690s' suggested minimum subsistence budget, deflated for each decade in line with the index (from Appendix 5.2). For the decades of the 1580s and 1590s this deflation produces slightly lower sums than the figures in the suggested subsistence budgets above (£2 0s. 7d. for the 1580s and £2 15s. 4d. for the 1590s). The 1690s budget above was adapted from the similar exercise undertaken by Botelho, Wrightson and Levine, who used payments by poor law officials in Suffolk and Essex as a guide to the cost of

living. Archer's figures for the earlier period are based on London prices, and include some payments by the London guilds and livery companies to their members, which may explain the difference. The lower figures produced by deflating the 1690s budget have been used as the *minimum subsistence budget* throughout Appendix 5.3, representing the very least sum on which an almsperson could have been expected to survive.

The striking finding from this comparison is that, throughout the period, over a third of almshouses where the existence of a stipend is known provided their occupants with allowances *below* the minimum subsistence level, and a sizeable number provided no stipend at all (see figure 5.11 below).

Figure 5.11 Almshouse stipends 1550-1700
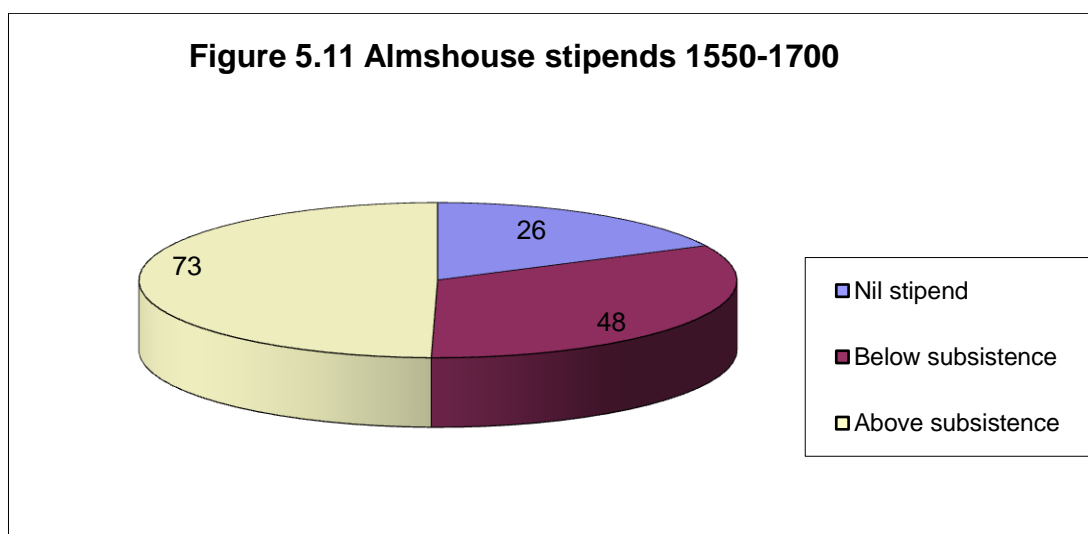
Source: Appendix 5.3

This was true especially for Kent, the relatively wealthy south-eastern county, where prices and the cost of living were likely to have been closest to the prices used in estimating the minimum subsistence level (see figure 5.12 below).

Figure 5.12 Almshouse stipends by county 1550 - 1700
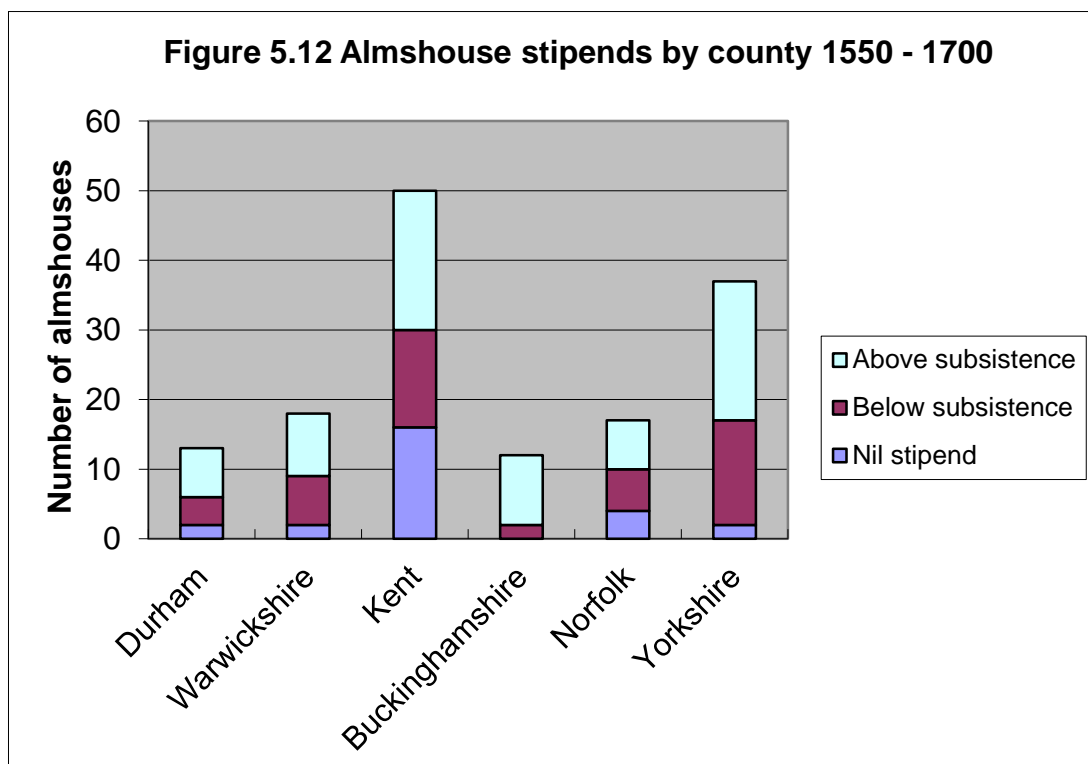
Source: Appendix 5.3

It was also largely true across the period, with little variation (see figure 5.13 below. Here the column for the 1550s' stipends includes some almshouses founded before 1550).

Figure 5.13 Almshouse stipends by decade 1550 - 1700
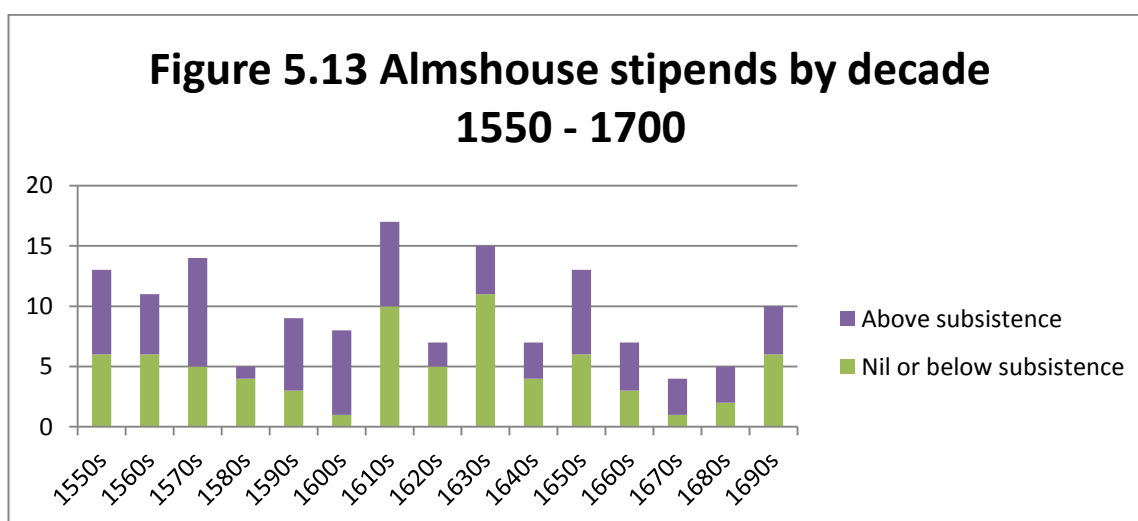
Source: Appendix 5.3

The implication of this is that, in many establishments, the almshouse stipend was not in itself enough for a poor person to survive on; it was, instead, merely a contribution towards a poor person's maintenance, as was, similarly, parish poor relief. Also of note is the considerable number of almshouses where no endowment was provided to maintain a stipend at all. Appendix 5.3 only includes almshouses where the amount (or lack) of stipend is known; there are many other foundations in the three counties, or recorded by Jordan, where it is not known whether or not a stipend was paid. It is impossible to judge how the information from these establishments, if known, might affect the overall pattern. The fact remains, however, that large numbers of almshouse occupants in the early modern period did not receive sufficient in stipends and allowances to maintain themselves at a basic subsistence level.

How then did poorer almspeople survive? This is not immediately clear. Despite a considerable amount of work by historians in recent decades, the lack of evidence for the early modern period means that much about the material lives of the poor remains essentially unknowable. It is probable that some almspeople worked, although the formal evidence for this is scanty. As shown in chapter 4, some almshouses expected their residents to work, although it is not known how many actually did so. Archbishop George Abbot's statutes for his hospital in Guildford (1622) commended 'any Brother or Sister who hath skill in any manuall Trade, do work in the same, either within the Hospitall or wthout, to gett some part of their living'.[155] William Harrison, admitted to the hospital in 1660, had been the archbishop's tailor

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[155] Taylor, *Abbot's Hospital*, p. 135.

many years before, and while he was in the hospital he was employed to make the hospital gowns.[156] Goodwife Drew was given special dispensation in 1632 to live out of Hawkins' Hospital at Chatham for 30 days at a time, because she was 'a very necessary woman' who performed the duties of midwife or nurse in the parish.[157] In 1614, the almswomen of St John's Hospital in the centre of Sandwich were given twenty shillings yearly by the town to look after poor people sent there; the following year the hospital was granted the market toll on corn, in return for which the almspeople were expected to sweep and clean the cornmarket.[158]

For most older people in the early modern period, there was no alternative but to keep working as long as they were able, in whatever capacity. The majority of almshouses, however, were intended for the poor and impotent, supposedly those who through age or disability were no longer able to work to support themselves. Indeed, the residents of St Bartholomew's Hospital, Sandwich, had to give up working their farm in 1684 and install a tenant, as it had become beyond their capacity.[159] Perhaps surprisingly, then, the seventeenth-century accounts of Sir John Boys' Jesus Hospital in Canterbury, show numerous payments to named almsmen for building and maintenance work they had undertaken around the almshouse. For instance, in 1637 Ralph Rachell was paid 1s. 4d. for carpentry work, John Blacke 2d. for scouring the gutter in the street, and Ralph Baylye 'and his man' a total of 5s. 11d. for brickwork, whitewashing, 'worke about the

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[156] Ibid., p. 50.
[157] MALSC CH 108/2 Hawkins Hospital Minute Book 1617 – 1691, p. 101.
[158] 'Sandwich Almshouses', pp. 5 - 6.
[159] Ibid., p. 12.

pumpe' and general repairs.[160] Boys' statutes had specified that his almspeople might engage in 'any manual trade or day labour'.[161] Less physically demanding work such as spinning, which could be undertaken in a person's own room, was the sort of occupation which almspeople, particularly women, would have been able to continue into extreme old age, although this has left no sign in the records. Other almspeople performed additional paid tasks within the establishment, such as caring for older residents or reading prayers. Goodman Bliss, for instance, was employed as the village schoolmaster while resident in the Leamington Hastings almshouse in the late seventeenth century, with his wife assisting him in teaching the smaller children.[162]

Others may have had private means. Some almshouses, for instance the Lord Leycester Hospital, specified maximum assets of the annual value of £5 on admission, accepting that people who might be poor were not necessarily destitute.[163] One of the Lord Leycester brethren, John Stowe, was expelled in 1655 when it was discovered he had 'an estate of his owne for life' on which he could live.[164] At some of the wealthier institutions, the almspeople were entitled to a share of the dividends when leases were renewed, and in some cases this compensated for inadequate allowances. For instance, Abbot's Hospital, which paid each almsperson a generous 2s. 6d. a week in 1622 (£6 10s. a year) continued to pay the same sum until the 1760s, by which time it was barely adequate. But the almspeople received occasional dividends which would have supplemented their stipend, for

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[160] CCA – U204/F1/1 Sir John Boys' Hospital, Canterbury, Ledger 1610 – 1637.
[161] CCA – U38/1 Jesus Hospital Memorandum Book.
[162] WRO DRO43a/195.
[163] Tibbits, 'Hospital', p. 127.
[164] WRO CR1600/19/26.

instance 4s. 6d. each on the renewal of a lease in 1676.[165] William Harrison, mentioned above, was so poor at the time of his admission to Abbot's Hospital that he had to be loaned the money to equip his room, though to be mentioned in the hospital records this must have been an unusual occurrence.[166] His future income from the stipend, his employment and his share of occasional dividends, was presumably expected to be sufficient to give him a reasonable prospect of paying back this loan. At a few exceptional establishments, such as the Lord Leycester Hospital mentioned earlier, dividends could even exceed the stipend, if the founder's arrangements allowed the almspeople to share in them.

At more modest establishments, the resources which poorer people could call on to augment their stipends might well have included support from family and friends. The existence of living relatives was no bar to admission, and many almspeople would have received help from family in the same way as did other older people in the community.[167] Pat Thane suggests that the emphasis by historical demographers on the household composition of the nuclear family has resulted in an underestimate of the importance of kin networks and the contribution of non-resident family members in the lives of the elderly.[168] This is, of course, impossible to quantify. Co-residence was also an extremely common method of family support amongst poorer people. Different generations sharing a room would not have been unusual amongst the poor generally, and was surprisingly common in almshouses. Sometimes this was to provide practical help to an older relative, as when the aged

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[165] Ibid.
[166] Taylor, *Abbot's Hospital*, p. 50.
[167] See, for instance, Hindle, *On the Parish?* pp. 48-58.
[168] Pat Thane, 'Old people and their families in the English past', in Martin Daunton (ed.), *Charity, Self-Interest and Welfare in the English Past* (London, 1996), p. 121.

Thomas Mann had his daughter and granddaughter living with him in 1694 in his room in the Leamington Hastings almshouse, 'to nurse him & tend him' by reason of his 'great age & infirmity'.[169]

It could also be a way of pooling family income and resources. The frequent rules against co-residence in almshouses, and periodic orders to clear almshouses of strangers, suggest that sharing one's room, even with non-relatives, was attractive and not at all unusual. In the preamble to his order 'That noe strangirs lye within the Hospetall', George Abbot acknowledged the likelihood that the residents of his almshouse would 'draw their Children and kinsfolkes unto them', but, like Archbishop Whitgift before him (see chapter 4) he absolutely forbade it, on pain of fines and expulsion.[170] The women of Lady Leveson's Hospital were criticised by the Master in 1707 for entertaining their relations there.[171] Unofficial residents of the Westgate almshouses in Warwick revealed by the census of 1587 included Margery Watts and her two children aged twelve and eight – 'they all beg' – and Agnes Pardy and her three children. They were all ordered to be removed.[172] Similarly, Stratford Corporation had to order their almshouses 'to be clear'd of all persons except the Alm'speople, Especially Young Women and Children'.[173] While the share of a rent-free room would have been an attractive incentive for outsiders, the potential earnings of these unofficial residents and their practical assistance, for instance in collecting firewood, could have helped to augment the almsperson's income.

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[169] WRO DRO43a/195.
[170] Taylor, *Abbot's Hospital*, p. 132.
[171] Gooder*, Temple Balsall*, p. 60.
[172] Kemp (ed.), *John Fisher,* pp. 170-171.
[173] SBT BRU15/15/106 Proposals for Regulating the Almshouse (late 17th – early 18th century).

There is evidence that some people in early modern almshouses where stipends were low or non-existent received parish poor relief after admission. For instance, the poor women in Thomas Oken's almshouse, Warwick, founded in 1571 with stipends of only four shillings a year, are unsurprisingly listed in the Warwick census of 1582 as receiving poor relief, in amounts of either 2d., 4d. or 6d. a week. The women in the Westgate almshouse, also in Warwick, were receiving similar amounts, although one, Agnes Twycrosse, received 8d. These variations would suggest that some of the women also had small earnings from employment.[174] Some almshouses emphasised that recipients should be those who were poor through no fault of their own; being prevented from earning one's living through becoming incapacitated by old age or disability was considered a misfortune, to which no blame attached. Similarly, aged recipients of parish poor relief were considered the 'deserving' poor, with no stigma, at least in the earlier part of the period, attached to their receipt of alms. The introduction of statutory poor relief through the Elizabethan poor laws did not at first distinguish the recipients of poor relief from other recipients of charity; all was considered charity. Even the increasing stigmatisation of parish paupers from the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, did not prevent the occupants of many almshouses continuing to be supported by parish poor relief, as is evidenced in the reports of the early nineteenth-century charity commissioners.[175]

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[174] Kemp, *John Fisher*, pp. 93, 94.

[175] For instance, Forster's almshouse, Darlington, and Sir John Duck's almshouse, Chester-le-Street, HCPP no. 21 (1829), p. 64; DRO Du 6/1/9(6).

More common still was likely to have been support through informal relief, gifts and charity hand outs. There is plentiful evidence from wills of donations and further endowments made to the occupants of almshouses. For instance, the sixteenth-century almshouse in the churchyard at Nuneaton, Warwickshire, is mentioned in the 1587 will of William Willoughby, who left 10s. annually for fuel for the almshouses there.[176] Many casual gifts would have gone unrecorded. In the fifteenth century Yorkshire maisons dieu she examined, Cullum believed that the main source of income for the poor occupants was likely to have been 'begging from door to door'.[177] Some almshouses rules specifically prohibited begging, for instance Archbishop Whitgift's rules for Eastbridge Hospital in Canterbury, and the nearby Jesus Hospital. Sir John Boys' statutes for Jesus Hospital, however, while outlawing begging within the city or elsewhere, yet allowed the almspeople to receive the benevolence of anybody 'willingly offering the same without craving', a nice distinction.[178] It is possible that outright begging by almshouse residents, seeking food and money door to door, did continue in practice, even if not officially condoned. Begging certainly seems to have remained culturally acceptable for poor people in the north of England.[179] In the nineteenth century, moreover, it was apparently the custom for the inhabitants of Boone's almshouses in Lee, Kent, to call regularly at the mansions of the wealthy families in Lee to collect 'surplus broken victuals' left out especially for them by their neighbours.[180] The location of many

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[176] HCPP no. 29 (1835), p. 993.
[177] Cullum, 'Pore People', p. 46.
[178] CCA – CC – SuppMs/6 Alderman Gray's Notebook p. 156; CCA – U38/1 Jesus Hospital Memorandum Book.
[179] See, for instance, an example from Cumberland in 1706, Hindle, *On the Parish?* p. 51.
[180] F.H. Hart, *History of Lee and its neighbourhood* (Greenwich, 1971), p. 10.

almshouses, beside the church, in the high street, or next to the guild hall, seems to have been purposefully designed to solicit alms from passers-by.

Figure 5.14 Gramer's almshouses, Mancetter, Warwickshire (photo: AN)

Abbot's Hospital in Guildford (1622) and Sandes Hospital in Kendal (founded in 1659), both situated on the high street of their respective towns, each had a collecting box for donations placed in the gateway. The one at Sandes is inscribed 'Remember the Poor Widows' (figure 5.15). The location of many almshouses in the churchyard of the parish church, and the practice of distributing bread and alms at church after Sunday service, would have served as a reminder to the parishioners both of the almspeople's need and of their suitability to be the objects of the parishioners' charity. At a time when donors were increasingly concerned about the deservingness of recipients of their charity, poor almspeople would have been an obvious choice. Almspeople were the 'approved' poor, their eligibility for largesse had already been demonstrated by their admission to the almshouse, so it was safe to donate to them.

Figure 5.15 Collecting box in the entrance to Sandes Hospital, Kendal (photo: AN)

Conclusion

In conclusion, it seems on the evidence presented here that not all occupants of almshouses can be regarded as the better-off poor. Tomkins has argued for a continuum of experience, 'from the comfortable to the impoverished'.[181] Their standard of living did not necessarily make almspeople a pauper elite, many of them were still obliged to adopt the same multiplicity of survival strategies as the poor in the community generally. Many aspects of their lives mirrored those of other poor people, including parish paupers. But almspeople did have some distinct advantages compared to other poor old people. The principal ones were the comfort and

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[181] Tomkins, 'Retirement', p. 264.

security of the accommodation; the permanence and regularity of the financial allowance, no matter how small; and their status as approved, deserving poor. Unlike the working poor, whose employment could be sporadic and insecure, many of them knew how much their weekly income was going to be. Unlike the recipients of parish poor relief, their allowances were dependent neither on assessed need, nor subject to the personal vagaries and possible prejudices of the parish overseers of the poor. Except in the few traditional almshouses where full board was provided and a communal existence encouraged, most residents of early modern almshouses were granted considerable independence and autonomy, freedom to spend the allowance as they chose, and live in reasonable privacy and comfort. The guaranteed nature of the stipend and the accommodation gave almspeople a measure of security which far exceeded that experienced by most poor people, whose lives were typically characterised by chronic insecurity and vulnerability. An almsperson could only be removed from their room, or lose their allowances, in clearly defined circumstances, for instance a persistent breach of the rules. This is in clear contrast to the lives of most poor people, who usually had no guarantee of a regular income, particularly once they became old and frail, no guarantee of a roof over their heads and no protection against eviction by unscrupulous landlords.

Yet there were some disadvantages. Many almspeople received no stipend or an inadequate one. For those who received a stipend, their income was fixed, and not responsive to individual need in the way that parish poor relief might be. Also almspeople may have had a more limited range of survival strategies open to them. For instance, many almshouses

had rules forbidding residents to marry after admission, and sharing rooms with outsiders was generally prohibited.[182] Yet remarriage and co-residence were common strategies employed by many older people to help eke out a living in old age.[183] The occupants of almshouses had no access to land, apart from small garden plots, nor did they have common rights, giving them less opportunity to add to their income by their own efforts; while their status as recipients of charity might have excluded them from undertaking less reputable forms of self-help, such as begging or pawning their clothes.

Overall, however, except for occupants of the very poorest almshouses, the advantages are likely to have outweighed the disadvantages. Admission to an almshouse was generally sought after, and Tomkins has suggested that the value placed on admission 'was higher than the material receipts alone would imply'. Tomkins suggests that the attraction was the status attached within the community to being a member of a particular institution, the confirmation of belonging, and the implied relationship with people of local standing such as patrons and trustees. Yet the benefits, particularly in terms of the accommodation, were real and tangible. Even more importantly, this status enabled almspeople to augment their income through the receipt of further donations and benefits. As a result, we cannot assume that the stated, paid allowance was their only income. Those admitted to an early modern almshouse may not necessarily have been amongst the ranks of the better-off poor before admission, as is often assumed, (and as may have become the case in later centuries); the

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[182] For instance, the rules of Abbot's Hospital, Guildford, chapters 5 & 11. Taylor, *Abbot's Hospital*, pp. 127, 132.
[183] See, for instance, Margaret Pelling, 'Old Age, Poverty and Disability in early modern Norwich: Work, Remarriage, and Other Expedients', in Margaret Pelling and Richard M. Smith (eds), *Life, Death and the Elderly. Historical Perspectives,* (London, 1991), pp. 62-84.

material benefits of an almshouse place may have differed widely; but admission placed many almshouse residents in a privileged position in relation to other groups of elderly poor.

6. Case Study: An almshouse in the parish welfare economy

'Almshouses require the attention of historians working at the local level if we are ever fully to understand their place in the history of the mixed economy of welfare'.[1]

As outlined in the introduction to this project, there have been few attempts to place almshouses within the context of the overall range of accommodation and assistance provided for poor people in early modern England. This chapter will present a detailed study of one seventeenth-century almshouse in rural Warwickshire alongside an examination of the other welfare resources available in that parish, and will analyse the way these were utilised together for the benefit of the whole community. Leamington Hastings was chosen for this case study for two main reasons. First of all, relatively unusually for a parish of its size, it had an endowed almshouse for eight people, founded in 1607, with records and accounts surviving from 1686. Secondly, a range of other contemporary records have survived for the parish, including the overseers' accounts from 1655, the records of the Poors Plot charity from 1671, and the parish registers from 1559. Together with wills, hearth tax returns, quarter session orders and some manorial and settlement documents, this gave the potential to examine the almshouse alongside a number of other strands of the welfare economy in operation in this particular parish.[2]

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[1] Goose, 'Mixed economy', p. 17.

[2] The survival of this number of early documents for one parish is unusual. Steve Hindle points out that only nineteen Warwickshire parishes have surviving overseers' accounts from before 1760, Hindle, 'Birthpangs'. Leamington Hastings' overseers' accounts commence a century before that; only two Warwickshire parishes are earlier. Moreover, an examination of the catalogues in Warwick County Record Office reveals only five other rural parishes in the county

John Broad has challenged historians to adopt 'a more holistic approach' in our attempts to understand the operation of parish relief in the time of the Old Poor Law.[3] He describes, for instance, the complementary nature of charitable funds and parish relief, which together provided a 'raft of security' for the poor, although how this operated in practice might differ from parish to parish according to local circumstances, resources and attitudes. Marjorie McIntosh, tracing the development of parish responsibilities for the poor in the sixteenth century, similarly points to the 'complementarity' and 'lack of rigid definition' in the networks of care which supported needy people, networks which were comprised of family, friends and neighbours as well as local institutions and officials. Indeed, McIntosh argues that 'a contrast between formal and informal or between public and private care would … have puzzled Elizabethans'.[4] The seventeenth century, however, saw the imposition and spread of formal relief beyond towns like Hadleigh, to include the whole country in a statutory system based on the parish and overseen by local justices of the peace. At the same time, the extensive deployment of commissioners for charitable uses in the early decades of the seventeenth century marked the beginning of a clearer distinction for the concept of private charity, and these developments might have been expected to disrupt the integration described by McIntosh. This case study will attempt to adopt Broad's 'holistic approach' in order to understand

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with a similar range of surviving early archival material, and none of these had an almshouse in this period.

[3] Broad, 'Parish economies'.

[4] McIntosh, 'Networks of care', p. 71-89.

how the welfare system operated in this one parish, and the place of the almshouse within it.

The parish of Leamington Hastings had a range of resources available to it in the second half of the seventeenth century, most notably the almshouse; and the survival of a number of different records means that an attempt can be made to examine in some detail how the parish used these resources together and in total to meet the needs of its poor. Despite its considerable endowment, the almshouse is characterised by its non-institutional nature and relatively lowly status. Unlike Trollope's stereotypical portrayal of an almshouse from this era, there was no master to supervise the almspeople; the residents wore no uniform gowns; there appear to have been no rules; and there was no obvious corporate life. Unlike the Brethren of the Lord Leycester Hospital in Warwick, for example, the almspeople did not attend the parish church seated conspicuously towards the front of the nave, but on benches tucked away at the back of the church.[5] Yet the almshouse was evidently highly valued, and its survival was fought for at some considerable cost to the parish. From its records, moreover, it seems that the almshouse was fully integrated into the welfare provision in the parish, and its resources were at times used quite loosely to benefit the parish poor, overlapping at times with parish relief. This is in contrast to a self-governing institution such as the Lord Leycester Hospital, which had an existence completely independent of the town and parish of Warwick in which it was situated. With four-fifths of the places available allocated to men from outside

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[5] WRO CR 1600/31 House Book of the Lord Leycester Hospital, 10 April 1664; G.E. Wigram, History of Leamington Hastings, (no date), p. 8.

the town, it could be argued that the Lord Leycester's main contribution to the relief of the town's poor was in dispensing casual relief to beggars at the almshouse gate.

It seemed, then, that a study of Leamington Hastings might highlight some of the issues raised in the project, particularly the role and importance in the local welfare economy of these local, non-stereotypical almshouses compared with better known and documented, more formal, institutions. This is not to suggest, however, that the Leamington Hastings almshouse was entirely typical or representative of the majority of almshouse foundations; but it is an example from a different end of the spectrum of provision than that usually presented in detailed studies.[6] This chapter will include an examination of the founding and rescue of the Humphrey Davis Hospital, (as the almshouse was usually known); how the almshouse was used and managed within the parish; the availability and use of other charitable resources and of parish housing; and how the total resources of the parish were deployed to meet the needs of the poor.

Leamington Hastings is located in rural east Warwickshire, in the felden region of mixed farming, between the market towns of Rugby to the north and Southam to the south. The parish is made up of four main settlements: the small village of Leamington Hastings itself with its church and manor house; the hamlet of Hill just outside the village; the larger settlement of Broadwell a mile and a half to the south; and the hamlet of Kites Hardwick a mile and a half to the north east, where the road from Rugby to Southam and Banbury crosses the

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[6] For instance: Joyce, *Patronage and Poverty*; Porter, *Charterhouse.*

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river Leam at Thurleston Bridge. In the second half of the seventeenth century the parish contained just around ninety households, suggesting a population of close to 400 people.[7] Forty-eight percent of households were assessed as exempt from paying the Hearth Tax in 1670, higher than the average for Warwickshire.[8]

The founding of the almshouse

For a parish of its size, Leamington Hastings in the seventeenth century seems to have been well endowed with charitable resources. The main benefactor had been Humphrey Davis, who in his will dated 17 December 1607 left land and property to support an almshouse for eight poor people. They were to be placed 'in my howse at Lemington which I have provided for the maintenaunce of those poore people'.[9] In his will this legacy is listed after the more detailed bequest of a fellowship and six exhibitions at Queens' College Cambridge. It gives little indication of what sort of establishment Davis intended (or indeed may have already provided). No independent trust was established: his heirs were to be responsible for maintaining the poor inmates from the income of the lands they had inherited. Davis defined neither who the poor should be nor where they should be from; this was left to his heirs to determine.

The surviving almshouse building, next to the vicarage and close by the church and manor house, is of early seventeenth-century origin, although

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[7] The 1670 Hearth Tax returns show 94 households, including the inhabitants of the almshouses and two empty cottages, Arkell & Alcock (eds), *Warwickshire Hearth Tax*, pp. 54, 58, 281-2. Population of 396 has been calculated by multiplying 92 households by 4.3, as suggested in Hindle, 'Birthpangs', p. 10n. This is above the average of 271 for the Warwickshire parishes in Kineton hundred examined by Hindle, perhaps reflecting the number of separate settlements in the parish, ibid., pp. 34-5.

[8] The average percentage of exempt households for Warwickshire in 1670 was 38 per cent, Arkell & Alcock, *Warwickshire Hearth Tax*, p. 60.

[9] NA Prob/11/111, Will of Humphrey Davis.

considerably altered internally. It has been assumed by MacFarquhar and others, from the plaque on the front wall, that the building was erected by Sir Thomas Trevor in 1633.[10]   But it is probable that this building is indeed the house provided by Humphrey Davis. Eight almspeople are named in a document relating to the court case in February 1634, which suggests that they were already in residence, and the chancery suit judgement refers to the almshouse building as if it already existed.[11] Also, the three doors in the front of the building have apparently been cut through the walls, suggesting the adaptation of an existing domestic building to provide separate entrances to the individual apartments.[12]

Figure 6.1 Humphrey Davis almshouse, Leamington Hastings (photo: AN)

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[10] G.I. MacFarquhar, *Leamington Hastings Almshouses and Poor's Plots,* (Rugby, 1984), p. 5. For inscription, see opening of chapter 1. Introduction.
[11] WRO DR43a/iii/12 Copy of Bill in the Chancerie relating to the Hospital at Leamington Hastings; NA C90 Roll 6, Commissioners for Charitable Uses, Confirmation in the case of Leamington Hastings charity, 7 Charles I.
[12] Salzman, *Warwickshire, Vol. 6*, p. 149. A similar arrangement saw separate entrances made in Lawrence Sherriff's house in Rugby, when he bequeathed his house to four poor men in 1567. Rouse, *Rugby School,* p. 34.

Very little is known about Humphrey Davis, the founder of the almshouse. In his will of 1607 he is referred to as a gentleman, but in their chancery suit in the 1630s the parishioners describe him as 'schoolmaster'. He studied at Cambridge University, gaining his MA from Queens' College in 1575. He matriculated in 1567, which suggests that he was born around 1550. According to the college records he was from Warwickshire, but it is more likely that he came from Wales. He was appointed rector of LLanvyllin, Montgomery in 1571 while still at Cambridge, and Vicar of Darowen, also Montgomeryshire, in 1577.[13] Both parishes are in the diocese of St Asaph's, and it is possible that he was related to Thomas Davis, Archdeacon and later Bishop of St Asaph's, also a benefactor of Queens' College, Cambridge, who died in 1573.

Apart from his early clerical appointments, nothing further is known of Humphrey Davis's career until he was licensed schoolmaster for Leamington Hastings in 1605.[14] On his death in 1607 he left a considerable estate which the parishioners in the chancery suit argued 'that hee had acquired by his labour'. This was presumably intended to emphasise for the purposes of the court case that his estate was not inherited family land to which his relatives might lawfully lay claim.[15] How he accumulated his wealth, what sort of man he was, and what

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[13] John Venn & J.A. Venn (eds), *Alumni Cantabrigienses,* Part I, vol. 2, (Cambridge, 1922), p. 15. Venn has Davis's second appointment as *Darwen*, but Darwen in Lancashire was not a parish in the sixteenth century, and it seems more likely that the place was Darowen, in the same diocese and county as Davis's first appointment.

[14] LRO B/V/1/24 Liber Cleri, Lichfield & Coventry Diocese, 1605. He had already been living in Leamington Hastings for some years at this point, as he was named in a land transfer of 1593, WRO DR43a/iii/5. His brother Thomas lived in the neighbouring parish of Grandborough, and it is possible that this was the reason for Humphrey settling in Warwickshire.

[15] His will appears to have been the subject of an unsuccessful challenge by a group of Welsh relatives including Hugh Davis, *consanguineum* (possibly another brother), and his sisters Honoria, Grace, Ellinor and Alice, all living in the counties of Caernarvon or Denbigh, NA Prob/11/115, Sentence of Humphrey Davis 1610.

was the motivation behind his bequest is not known. A few years before he made his own will in 1607, he witnessed that of Oliver Killingworth, described in this document as a labourer, who left the use of his money to the poor of Leamington, a sum of about £35.[16] More significantly, Davis was named as executor in the 1603 will of Thomas Squire, alias Irish, a husbandman. Most of Squire's personal bequests were in the form of debts owing to him, and he gave five shillings yearly for the repair of the parish church. The rest of his goods he left for his executor to 'laye forthe to the best benefit he can', and 'the stocke beinge p[re]served' the yearly profits were to be used for the poor of the parish, at the discretion of his executor.

Together with Davis's own will, these three wills made within a few years of each other in the first decade of the seventeenth century seem to represent a departure from the previous tradition of charitable giving in the parish. Of the seventeen extant wills of Leamington Hastings parishioners from the last twenty years of the sixteenth century, four left small sums of money for the poor of the parish: George Perkins and Thomas Sedgely each left sixpence 'for the poore mens boxe', John Over left twelve pence 'to the poore mens boxe of Lem[m]ington towurdes the Reliefe of the poore and needye', and John Pike left five shillings 'to the poore of the parishe'.[17] Small one-off bequests like this continued into the seventeenth century; for instance, Thomas Walford (1625) left four shillings 'to the poor people of Hill'; John Man (1636) 'five dozen [loaves] of white bread' to be given to the poor at his funeral; and Alexander

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[16] LRO 1606, cal. 1166.21; NA C93/4/7 regarding the will of Oliver Killingworth.
[17] LRO: 1581, cal. 125.22: 1589, cal. 423.16; 1591, cal. 60.11; 1598, 143.10.

Anstye (1655) ten shillings to the poor. This sort of bequest had, however, almost completely died out by the last decades of the century.[18]

What is different about the bequests of Davis and Squires, and probably Killingworth, is that they provided permanent foundations, or stock from which the interest could be used to benefit the parish in perpetuity. As such, they fit the pattern identified by W.K. Jordan, whereby the early years of the seventeenth century, in particular, saw a marked increase in endowments for permanent charitable use. They do not, however, fit the profile of the benefactors so admired by Jordan. A labourer, husbandman and ordained schoolmaster were far removed in wealth and social status from the gentry and merchant aristocracy identified by Jordan as the principal actors in his philanthropic revolution. The subsequent history of Squire's and Davis's legacies emphasises, moreover, just how vulnerable testamentary bequests were to the inaction or ineptitude of executors, or to the greed and envy of relatives. Jordan's aggregated figures enumerate wishes, that is, the donor's aspirations, but they do not take into account whether those wishes actually resulted in the charitable benefits intended.[19]

In this case it seems that not only was Davis's own will subverted, resulting in costly legal proceedings for the parish, but also that Davis's inaction as executor of Squire's will caused the parish loss. From an application by a group of parishioners to the Lichfield and Coventry Consistory Court in 1611, it

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[18] NA Prob/11/145; LRO 1636, cal. 1405.18; NA Prob/11/248. The exception towards the end of the century was the Rev. John Allington's request to send 'charities to every poor neighbour' rather than gathering a 'multitude' at his funeral in 1683, NA Prob/11/373.
[19] As such, they cannot be used as an accurate representation of the scale of charitable giving, although this should not diminish the importance of Jordan's achievement.

is clear that, despite being named as executor, Humphrey Davis had not applied for the will to be proved after Squire's death in 1603.[20] By the terms of the will, Davis was to use Squire's legacy to benefit the poor at his discretion. It is possible that Davis had intended to do this by providing schooling in the parish, hence his application to be licensed schoolmaster in 1605. But when Davis died in 1607, the remains of Squire's legacy passed with Davis's estate into the hands of Davis's executor, his nephew Edmund Davis. By his will, Davis left his lands to his brother Thomas and Thomas's wife Katherine (Edmund's parents) for their lives, and then to be shared by Edmund and his siblings, with the profits of the lands to be used to support the bequests to Queens' College Cambridge and the Leamington Hastings almshouse. But some time before 1611, Edmund Davis died intestate, leaving both Squire's and Davis's legacies in legal limbo.[21] Once Thomas and Katherine Davis had both died, the estate then passed into the hands of Edmund's brother, also called Thomas. This Thomas apparently felt under no obligation to fulfil the charitable responsibilities of the two wills.

Gaining control of the almshouse

Many charitable endowments were abused and misappropriated, and the Davis charity seemed destined to disappear, along with the remains of Squire's legacy, when Sir Thomas Trevor bought the lordship of the manor of Leamington Hastings in 1630 and immediately became actively involved in its affairs.[22]

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[20] LRO 1611, cal. 473.9.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Jones, *Law of Charity*, pp. 20, 22.

Figure 6.2 Sir Thomas Trevor (photo: AN)

As lord of the manor, a leading government lawyer and one of the Barons of the Exchequer, Trevor assisted the parishioners in bringing a suit in chancery in 1633 under the terms of the Statute of Charitable Uses to wrest control of the hospital's assets from Thomas Davis. Davis was alleged to have taken the income intended for the hospital 'to his own use without placinge any one poore person in the said house' and had 'gone about utterly to defraud, defeat and overthrow the said charitable use'.[23] According to an account written around 1685, the land Humphrey Davis had intended for the support of the hospital was 'embezled and sold away' by his nephew Thomas until the arrival of Sir Thomas Trevor, when Mathew Over 'office holder in the said p[ar]ish was imployed to

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[23] NA C93/13/14: NA C90/6; WRO DR43a/iii/12 Copy of Bill in the Chancerie relating to the Hospital at Leamington Hastings.

begin to mannage and to sollicite a sute … for the Recovery of the said Lands, towards w[hi]ch the freeholders and tenants did very freely lend their money'.[24]

Unravelling the facts of the case from the Chancery records, it appears that things were not as straightforward as this local memory suggests. It seems that Matthew Over, at the time one of the Overseers for the Poor of Leamington Hastings, had in 1628 accepted the sum of £110 from Thomas Davis in lieu of support for the almshouse.[25] But after Trevor had instigated the chancery case this arrangement was deemed unacceptable by the Commissioners for Charitable Uses. The eventual outcome of the case was that a very aggrieved Thomas Davis was deprived of the Hospital lands. Also, the parish was allowed to retain the £110 they had received from him, to cover the remainder of Squire's legacy, and for 'repairinge and further fillinge of the said Almeshouse', with any residue to be used 'toward the defraieinge and paiment' of the parishioners' 'charges and expences'.[26] Thomas Davis not only lost the lands but any involvement in the hospital, for which an independent trust was established with ten local feoffees, comprising five local gentry, including Sir Thomas Trevor and his son, and five leading parishioners.[27]

There is no mention of the original agreement between Thomas Davis and Matthew Over in subsequent parish accounts of the case, perhaps because the collusion with this attempt to alienate an endowed charity did not reflect well

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[24] WRO DR43a/194 Records of the Poors Plot Charity.

[25] NA C90/6. Thomas Davis appears to have come to a similar agreement with the Master and Fellows of Queens College Cambridge to make them a payment of £250 in lieu of supporting the fellowship and exhibitions there, of which £100 had been paid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] The ten feoffees were: Sir Thomas Trevor, his son Thomas Trevor Esq., Sir Edward Peyto, John Sample Esq., Roland Wilcox Esq., and Mathew Over, Richard Watson, John Mason, John Clarke, and James Mason, 'yeomen and inhabitants'.

on the parishioners. But there was some question later of what had happened to the money Thomas Davis had paid, and to other money lent by individual parishioners to pay the costs of the court case, with Matthew Over's son John having to answer for the whereabouts of parish money after his father's death.[28] The case amply demonstrates both the vulnerability of so many early modern charitable endowments, and the necessity of the Elizabethan Statute of Charitable Uses. It also highlights the heavy responsibilities laid on quite ordinary people when they served as parish officials. Until Sir Thomas Trevor's critical intervention, the parishioners seem to have been willing to reach an accommodation with Thomas Davis. Perhaps the initial acceptance of the offer from Davis of £110 in settlement was in anticipation of the likely decades of struggle to come for Matthew Over and his successors in trying to extract payment for maintaining the almshouse from Thomas Davis and generations of his descendants.

The success of the case not only guaranteed the survival of the almshouse, but changed its character. Without an independent body of trustees, the almshouse could either have remained a family-run charity for the benefit of those upon whom the family chose to expend their patronage or, as happened in this case, could have fallen victim to neglect and misappropriation. Through the suit in chancery, Sir Thomas Trevor and the parish, by wresting control of

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[28] NA C93/30/28 Chancery Inquisition 1669. The situation was complicated by another sum of £110 in parish stock which needed to be accounted for, some of which also seems to have been spent on legal fees in the chancery suit. This £110 was made up of £50 from Thomas Squire's legacy, and £60 from a former vicar, Thomas Lever, apparently in recompense for his absence from the parish. The attempt to reconstruct how this had been spent in the court case (and how much had been lost) takes up the beginnings of the Poors Plot Charity accounts, WRO DR43a/194 Records of the Poors Plot Charity.

the endowment from Davis's heirs, brought the foundation under the control of locally-appointed trustees for the benefit of local people. Had Thomas Davis not misappropriated the almshouse assets, he and his heirs, like so many landed families, could have used the almshouse for their own aged retainers in perpetuity. Although this had not been specified by Davis, the almshouse now became used solely to benefit the parish poor. There is an appropriateness about this as the costs of the legal action, which must have been considerable, seem to have been met largely from parish resources. Although this may have been a contentious decision, those involved seem to have been quite satisfied that it was appropriate to spend the parish stock in this way to win back for the community assets they described in 1685 as being worth £800.[29] The endowment accordingly became a benefit to the whole community, not just to potential residents of the almshouse, because local control of the almshouse enabled parish paupers to be placed there, reducing the burden to the whole community of the parish rates. Using charitable resources in this way to benefit the whole community by reducing the rates was pragmatic, and would have made eminent sense at a time when there were less rigid conceptual boundaries. But it was already disapproved of by some commentators, and in later years the Charity Commissioners would insist on a narrow interpretation of charitable uses, preventing charitable funds being used more generally to benefit anyone other than the direct intended recipients.[30]

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[29] WRO DR43a/194 Poors Plot Charity. 'As for and concerning the parish Stocke or money given or raised for the Releife of the poore of the parish of Leamington Hastings'.
[30] See the discussion in Hindle, *On the Parish?* pp. 142-6. Hindle notes that in 1675 the Warwickshire bench had to remind overseers not to use bequests for the poor to reduce the rates.

It is clear that it was the intervention of Sir Thomas Trevor which enabled the case to be successfully concluded to the benefit of the parishioners.[31] It is likely that he used his legal contacts and political influence in pursuit of the case. This is unlikely to have been motivated simply by financial considerations. Trevor was a wealthy man from a career spent accumulating public offices, and, at that point, was still at the height of his powers.[32] He was new to the role of lord of the manor, and most probably was keen to make his mark locally, unlike his predecessors, the Staffords, who had been noticeable absentees and unengaged in local affairs. Trevor was subsequently buried in the parish church where he had already commissioned a striking memorial to himself (figure 6.3). He was typical of many of the gentry in seventeenth-century Warwickshire who were 'comparative newcomers to the shire', and like other 'minor gentry were often of very insecure status'.[33] His son Thomas, born in 1612, was created a baronet in 1641, and Trevor no doubt had hopes of founding a titled dynasty.[34] In this he was not unusual. His intervention in the almshouse case ensured his name on a plaque in the centre of the village, representing his generosity,

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[31] Without Thomas Trevor to use his influence on their behalf, Queens' College Cambridge lost Davis's fellowship and exhibitions in 1644, Venn & Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, p. 15.

[32] Trevor was educated at Shrewsbury School and called to the Bar in 1603. He was appointed solicitor general to Prince Charles in 1611 and was knighted in 1619. Between 1601 and 1624 he served as a member of Parliament for various places, and in 1625 was appointed king's serjeant and one of the barons of the exchequer. In 1637 he gave judgement in favour of the crown's right to collect ship money, for which he was impeached by Parliament in 1641. Nevertheless he accepted the authority of Parliament at the outbreak of Civil War and refused an order from the king to attend him at Oxford. After the execution of the king he retired from public life and died at Leamington Hastings in 1656. E.I. Carlyle, rev. W.H. Bryson, 'Trevor, Sir Thomas', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27735 (accessed 16 December 2013).

[33] Hughes, *Politics,* p. 37.

[34] However, the second Sir Thomas Trevor died childless in 1676 and the manor of Leamington Hastings descended to Charles Wheler, grandson of the first Sir Thomas's sister.

honour and virtue, the marks of entitlement to gentry status in the absence of

birth and breeding.[35]

Figure 6.3 Monument to Sir Thomas Trevor in All Saints Church, Leamington Hastings
(photo: AN)

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[35] Heal & Clive Holmes, *Gentry*, 1994), p. 372. See also the seventeenth-century view of the
traditional obligations of the lord of the manor quoted in Adam Nicolson, *Earls of Paradise*,
(London, 2008), p. 24.

As this account demonstrates, those who executed donors' bequests or ensured the survival of endowments, could be as important in shaping the future role and function of foundations as the original donors; as, indeed, could be the people who became involved in running such establishments. Van Leeuwen theorises that, for the elite, involvement might have a number of possible motivations but was always principally self-interested.[36] The conclusion reached by Cavallo, for instance, is that the Italian urban elites she studied were motivated by self-interest in becoming involved in local hospitals, enabling them to exercise patronage and influence in allocating valuable places.[37] The parish elite who became involved in running Davis's almshouse might have been motivated by self-interest, but it was in a less obvious guise than that described by Cavallo. The trustees who attended the recorded meetings were more often the local parish representatives and the vicar, rather than the absentee gentry members who only made occasional appearances, so the opportunity existed for the exercise of local patronage. However, there appears to be no evidence, in the seventeenth century at least, that admissions were influenced by personal relationships and favouritism. On the contrary, almshouse places and resources appear to have been used for the benefit of the whole parish. Nevertheless, the actions of the trustees could arguably be ascribed to a combination of altruism, self-importance, and a desire to maintain social order and economic stability in the parish.

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[36] Marco H.D. Van Leeuwen, 'The Logic of charity. Poor relief in pre-Industrial Europe', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. XXIV, no. 4 (Spring 1994), pp.589-613. See also the discussions in Colin Jones, 'Some recent trends in the history of charity', in Martin Daunton (ed.), *Charity, self-interest and welfare in the English past,* (London, 1996), pp. 51-63, and Alan Kidd, 'Philanthropy and the "social history paradigm"', *Social History,* vol. 21 (1996), pp. 180-192.
[37] Cavallo, 'Motivation of benefactors', pp. 52, 56, 60.

How the parish used the almshouse

The meeting of the almshouse trustees on 18 June 1694 records a scenario entirely typical of the sort that has attracted the attention of many writers on almshouses.[38] Thomas Man was ordered to expel his unmarried daughter Jane from the almshouse because she had become pregnant.[39] Here we have a human interest story, enlivened by scandal, with named individuals making up the *dramatis personae*. The reaction of the trustees seems to confirm the impression that an almshouse, described in this case as a 'house dedicated to a pious use and charity', was intended to be a quasi-religious institution, and that regulating the behaviour of the poor was a prime function of these institutions. Yet the evidence does not bear out this interpretation. There is no suggestion that the Leamington Hastings almshouse inmates were expected to undertake any rigorous devotions or religious observances, and it does not appear that they were expected to attend church any more than other parishioners. The almshouse trustees may have made a point of expressing their disapproval of Jane's behaviour, but they had little option as she was committed to the house of correction for bastardy at the next quarter sessions.[40] The new rule ordered by the trustees in response to the scandal, that no-one over the age of twelve or who was not born in the parish could lodge with an almshouse resident without consent, seems fairly hollow given that Jane herself had been granted permission to reside there.[41] Finally, in 1706, Jane Man was once again allowed

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[38] See, for instance, MacFarquhar, *Leamington Hastings*, p. 17.
[39] WRO DR43a/195
[40] WQS Vol. IX, p. 107
[41] The apparent acceptance of children under twelve in the almshouse is also interesting in view of the discussion about almshouse occupants in chapter 3.

to live in the almshouse. By this time she was 48 years old, still single, her parents were dead and her illegitimate child presumably now apprenticed or in service. The fact that she was allowed back into the almshouse suggests that she had no other means of support, and that it was a pragmatic decision by the trustees which absolved the parishioners from having to relieve her through the poor rates. As chapter 4 has demonstrated, only a minority of almshouses had formal rules, and this example would appear to confirm the suggestion made earlier that the importance of rules and regulations has been overemphasised in the almshouse literature.[42]
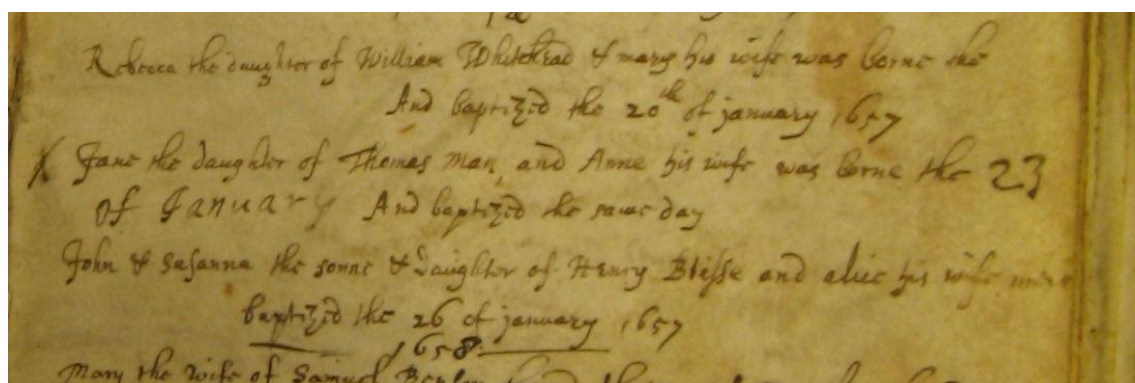
Figure 6.4 Entry in the parish register, showing the mark beside Jane Man's baptism. (WRO DR43a/1 Leamington Hastings Register of Baptisms, Marriage and Burials 1559 - 1704, reproduced by permission of Warwick County Record Office)

More interesting, and possibly more typical, is the problem with which the trustees of the almshouse were grappling when they met on 20 October 1696. Despite an increase in the endowment by Dame Dorothy Wheler, and the building of an additional four rooms at the hospital, the income from the charity's

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[42] The interest in this aspect of almshouse life, while fitting the social control paradigm once in favour amongst historians, is probably disproportionate. Angela Blayden's examination of 126 almshouses in Surrey, for instance, identified extant rules and regulations for only 25 of them (paper given at the Family and Community Historical Research Society's Almshouse Conference, University of Hertford, 7 March 2009).

lands was proving insufficient to support more than seven poor people. The trustees resolved to revalue some of the leases, and to build additional tenements on their land to increase the rents 'by letting apartments to the parish for poor people as there shall bee occasion'. Sir William Wheler agreed to provide building materials from 'some old tenements' which stood on Bradwell Green which he wished to remove. In the meanwhile, their solution was to allocate one of the new rooms to old William Chittam as 'an eighth poor' on a reduced stipend until the matter of the rents could be resolved.[43] This was not the first time that the trustees had been forced to improvise in this way. In 1692 they had agreed that the interest on a £10 bond should be paid to the parish overseers to give six pence per week to Richard Over of Hardwick, 'as far as it will goe in the way of ease to the parish of so much of their weekly contribution that being as much as wee can yett spare towards an eighth person to bee of the hospitall'.[44]

The continual problem of balancing the charity's books is demonstrated by the payment of £1, rather than the usual 10s., to the curate Mr Kingsborough for keeping the accounts in 1696, 'so troublesome a year for money & loss in money'.[45] The work involved in keeping this charity afloat was amply justified by the benefits it brought to the whole community. The poor benefited through the possibility of an almshouse place at the end of their lives, and the ratepayers were relieved of some of the burden of supporting their elderly poor.

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[43] WRO DR43a/195 Davis/Wheler Charity 1686 - 1799.
[44] Ibid.
[45] The economic situation in 1696 was particularly desperate, as the crisis resulting from the Great Recoinage compounded the impact of poor harvests and war with France.

Who were the almspeople?

Some of the occupants of the almshouse in the seventeenth century can be identified by name. The first listing occurs in February 1634, with eight almspeople, seven men and one woman, included in a petition to Chancery regarding Thomas Davis' refusal to comply with the order to pass his uncle's lands to the new trustees for the hospital.[46] Some of the names in this list can be linked to individuals in the parish register, although complete assurance about identification is not always possible because of the recurrence of the same Christian name within families, and some gaps in the register where parts of pages have become illegible.[47] Nevertheless, some suggestions can be made. Nothing is known of Edward Eares, although the Ayres family feature regularly in parish documents of the seventeenth century, suggesting that he was a local man. A Widow Ayres was receiving parish poor relief in the 1680s.[48] Aymy Gisborne, the widow, was married in the parish in 1603, suggesting she was probably born some time before 1580. Her husband John appears to have died in 1608, leaving her with three small daughters under five. Her life was, in all likelihood, hard and impoverished. In 1634, when she was in the almshouse, she would probably have been in her late 50s or early 60s.

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[46] WRO DR 43a/iii/12. Copy of Bill in the Chancerie relating to the hospital at Leamington Hastings. The eight names are: Foulke Grolliver, Thomas Garrett, John Willcox, Edward Eares, Henry Hall, Aymy Gisburne, widow, John Benson and Richard Pedler (or Pedley).

[47] Even where the registers are complete, the amount of accompanying information is variable, and not always sufficient to distinguish between two people of similar names, or to identify the correct generation in a family. See the discussions in E.A. Wrigley (ed.), *Identifying People in the Past,* (London, 1973), pp. 5-15, 64-68.

[48] WRO DR43a/20 Overseers' Acounts 1681 – 1704.

Two of the men, John Benson and Henry Hall, also appear to have been at least in their 50s. Hall had a daughter in 1609, who died the same year, suggesting that he too was born around 1580 or earlier. John Benson was one of a large number of Bensons, making identification difficult. According to the parish register a John Benson senior died a pauper in 1608. A John junior is mentioned as having children baptised in 1603 and 1605, suggesting that he was also born before 1580.[49] Foulke Grolliver had a child baptised in 1590, which suggests that he was born around 1565 or before, making him probably in his late 60s or 70s at the time of the petition. He died in 1641. The ages of the other three almsmen can be tentatively suggested from births in the parish register: Richard Pedley born 1569, making him 64; and Thomas Garrett and John Wilcox both born 1564, making them 69.[50] At these ages, all these almspeople would have been considered old by contemporaries.[51]

In terms of their economic standing, the only information with which the names of these early almspeople can be compared is a list of tenants with a valuation of their property, compiled in 1629 for the sale of the manor to Sir Thomas Trevor. None of the almspeople appears as a tenant in 1629. This would suggest that most, if not all of them, were already inmates of the almshouse in 1629, lending weight to the possibility that the almshouse was already operational in some form before Sir Thomas Trevor's intervention. Alternatively, if they were the poorest and oldest parishioners, they might have

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[49] But after John's wife died in 1606 further children are born to a John junior (in 1611 and 1612) suggesting either that he had remarried or that the epithet had been passed to another John Benson.
[50] WRO DR43/1 Leamington Hastings parish register 1559 – 1704.
[51] Botelho, 'Seventeenth Century', pp. 115-117.

been illegal cottagers or inmates in other people's houses. Without the information from a household census or something similar, it is hard to be certain about this. Some people appearing on the tenants' list share a surname with one of the almshouse residents, and were probably from the same family, but it is not possible to say how closely related they were. For instance, Jeffrey Hall is listed as renting a cottage in Leamington worth 10s. a year, William Pedley has one messuage worth £3, Jeffrey (or Nicholas) Wilcox has a cottage in Bradwell valued at £1.[52] More substantial tenants were a Gisborne lately holding a farm at Hill worth £13, and Thomas and William Benson, holding farms worth £6 10s. and £8 respectively. These were relatively modest sums for farms on this manor. The range for the thirty farms listed went from £6 to £30, with the average at £12 10s. Typical rents for a cottage were from 10s. to 30s. Taken together this information suggests that the early residents of the almshouse were local people, generally elderly, and drawn from the less well-off strata of parish society.

After this early listing, there is a gap until the next mention of probable almshouse residents in the parish register. For instance, Widow Cleaver of Hill, described in the parish register as *ex Eleemosinariis una,* was buried in 1670, followed the same day by Widow Johnson *ex Eleemosinariis altera*. Isabella Canning *ex Elemosinary* was buried in 1674, and Alice Blythe 'one of ye Hospitall' in 1679.[53] From 1682, annual lists of burials in woollen were being

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[52] WRO CR 1319/95 Manor of Leamington Hastings - List of tenants 1629. The valuations are usually described as 'will be at the end of the aforesaid lease worth per annum…'.
[53] WRO DR43a/1 Leamington Hastings parish register 1559 – 1704. It is probable, although not absolutely certain, that the term *ex-elemosinary* refers to a resident of the almshouse rather than

recorded in the overseers' accounts and, either here or in the parish register, some people would be noted as 'beadswoman' or 'a member of the Hospitall'. After the almshouse accounts and minutes begin in 1686, individual residents are often named; Thomas Man, for instance, had a door lock fitted in 1690. When admissions are recorded they often note whose place had become vacant, giving further names. A review of the hospital seems to have been undertaken in 1698, when the names of all current residents were listed, the first such complete list since 1634.[54]

In total, thirty-three named individuals can be identified as having been resident in the hospital at some time between 1674 and 1720 (and a further three were supported elsewhere from hospital funds). The great majority of these names also appear in the 1674 Hearth Tax assessment, and appear to be identifiable as the same individuals, or, if not, members of the same family.[55] For instance, William Chittam, a labourer, was admitted to one of the almshouse rooms in 1696, where he died in 1698. The following year his son John was also allocated a place, dying shortly afterwards. William had appeared in the hearth tax returns in 1674 as exempt. An Adam Oakley was exempted from the tax in 1674. In 1686 his widow Jane died in the almshouse. Eleanor Blythe, dying in the almshouse in 1720 aged 96, was the widow of Thomas Blythe, exempted

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a recipient of parish relief. Widow Cleaver had received poor relief in 1667, but Widow Johnson does not appear at all in the overseers' accounts.

[54] There were ten residents occupying the eight places: Schoolmaster Henry Bliss and his wife, Widow Scotten, Widow Turner, Widow Hawten, Widow Russell, Widow Over, Mathew (Richard?) Over, and Richard Wheeler and his wife. This represents a considerable gender shift from the earlier listing (see discussion in chapter 4).

[55] WRO QS 11/56 Hearth Tax Assessment Book 1674, Knightlow Hundred, Southam Division. The 1674 assessment was chosen for this exercise because it is the assessment closest in date to the commencement of the surviving almshouse records. It is not known whether the assessment includes amongst the exempt those people already resident in the almshouse.

from the hearth tax in 1674. Of the twenty two almshouse residents who can be identified in the hearth tax returns, eighteen were assessed as exempt, or appear to be relatives of those who had been assessed as exempt. Of those paying the tax, Thomas Man, who died in the almshouse in 1696, had been assessed on one hearth, as had Thomas Isackson, whose daughter Susannah was given a place in the almshouse in 1703.

Hearth Tax assessments and the exempt category cannot be absolutely relied on as an indicator of who was poor. According to Arkell, 'not all the exempt were living in poverty'.[56] But while the poverty of some of those exempt may have been 'relative' rather than absolute, this still confirms the picture suggested earlier in the century, that the majority of the almspeople were of lowly economic status. The exceptions were two widows, Jane Twiggar who died in the almshouse in 1708 aged 92, and Faith Mathews who was a member of the almshouse but who died at Coventry in 1713. Jane's husband Richard Twiggar, a tailor, had been assessed on one hearth in 1670, and two hearths in 1674. His home was often mentioned in the overseers' accounts as the place where they met, and it may have been an inn or ale house.[57] Faith was the widow of Thomas Mathews, Sir Thomas Trevor's agent and probable tenant of the manor house, who had paid tax on eleven chimneys. The presence of these two widows suggests the possibility that, by the early eighteenth century, the pattern was changing and that some better off people were beginning to be admitted into the almshouse. This possibility is reflected in the evidence of wills

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[56] Arkell, 'Incidence of Poverty', p. 33.
[57] WRO DR43a/19 Overseers' Accounts 1676, 'It. Spent at Twiggers when wee made a levy and taken the constables accounts 4s 6d'.

left by Leamington Hastings parishioners. None of the seventeenth-century almshouse residents left a will. This is not surprising, but it does contrast with the evidence from other Warwickshire almshouses such as Stoneleigh, Stratford and Temple Balsall, where a few extant wills left by inmates suggest that these almshouses included people who were not the very poor.[58] Jane Twiggar did not leave a will, but letters of administration were granted to her son Nicholas after her death in 1708, suggesting there was some property at stake. Faith Mathews's husband Thomas died in 1685, leaving an estate worth £180 1s. 5d. to his wife and children. Similarly, Elizabeth Mathews, who died in the almshouse in 1723, was most probably the widow of John Mathews whose inventory in 1708 totalled £144 12s. 2d. A John Mathews, probably brother to Thomas, had been assessed on five hearths in 1674. These three widows appear to come from relatively, if not very, well-off families. Their presence in the almshouse in the early years of the eighteenth century suggests a shift might have been occurring in who was regarded as eligible, with better-off people now being included.

Until this point, the almshouse inhabitants had been identifiable as amongst the poorest in the parish, with no evidence to suggest that particular families were privileged. Many of the seventeenth-century almspeople had, in fact, been parish paupers prior to admission, as the following examples demonstrate. Ann Tue, 'maiden', who was buried 'out of the hospital' in 1687, aged 78, was on parish relief for years. It is possible that she was crippled in

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[58] Stoneleigh: Alcock, *People at Home*, p. 143; Stratford: Jones (ed.), *Inventories, Vol.I*, pp. 55, 171; Temple Balsall: WRO CR112/Ba65/47, CR112/Ba45, CR112/Ba55/2.

some way, as the overseers' accounts mention not only several purchases of shoes or boots for her (for instance, 1658, 1667, 1669, 1675) but also record that, in 1674, two shillings was 'payd to Mary Scotton for cuareing Ann Tewes lege'. From 1665 the parish paid for her to be boarded with various parishioners.[59] When the almshouse accounts begin in 1686 she was an almshouse resident; one of the first items of expenditure recorded is 'pd for a pare of shoose for Ann Tew 2s 6d'. The hospital paid one shilling for her burial in 1687, and a meeting of the trustees in 1688 noted 'Widow Horton is chosen to succeed Ann Tue in the hospitall'.[60] Margery Gulliams 'a diseased person' and her 80 year-old widowed mother were ordered to receive 12d. weekly from the parish by the Warwick Quarter Sessions in 1661.[61] There is no record of this maintenance in the overseers' accounts, but the overseers paid 11s. 2d. for repairs to their house in 1662 and 3s. for burying Widow Gulliams in 1665.[62] That same year Margery was indicted for stealing three pecks of wheat and barley, to the value of 10d. She confessed and was sentenced to be whipped.[63] How she supported herself for the next nine years is not known but, along with others, she received a dole of 1s. 6d. from the executors of John Masters' will in 1669.[64] Margery appears in the 1670 hearth tax records as exempt, and in 1674 Mary Scotten was paid 9s. by the overseers for lodging her for six months.[65] It is

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[59] WRO DR43a/19 'Paid to Thomas Mathewes for ye keeping of Ann Tue and for providing hir thinges necessary for hir - £1 8s 0d' (1665); ' Paid to John Mathews for Ann Tues board at 12d a week' (1672).
[60] WRO DR 43a/195 Accounts and minutes of Davis's charity 1686 – 1798.
[61] WQS Vol. IV, p. 158.
[62] WRO Dr43a/19.
[63] WQS Vol. VI, p. 159.
[64] WRO DR 43a/19 Overseers' Accounts 1655 - 1679.
[65] (Margr Gilly), Arkell & Alcock, *Warwickshire Hearth Tax*, p. 282.

not known when Margery was admitted to the hospital, but she died there in 1686.

Willam Chittam was admitted to the almshouse on a part stipend in 1696. He was a poor labourer, and had previously made many appearances in the overseers' accounts prior to his admission to the hospital, receiving payments for work done rather than relief. Examples include: 'It. payd to William Chitom for catchin the burds 1s. 6d.'; 'William Chittom for catching the birds 2s. 6d. (both 1676); 'Item paide to William Chitham for chasen of sparras 4s. 8d.' (1678); 'paid to William Chetam for killen of sparrows 1s.' (1683), and so forth.[66] It was the churchwardens' responsibility to get rid of sparrows, but here the expenditure is clearly being borne by the overseers, probably as a pragmatic alternative to supporting Chittam through poor relief. Other almshouse residents had previously been paid by the overseers to lodge or look after other poor people, for instance when they were sick. Mary Scotten, mentioned above, had lodged Ann Tue; Mary Rushall was paid a shilling in 1682 'for locken to ye widdow Cooks when she was sick'.[67] Henry Bliss, living in the almshouse with his wife Alice, was paid from the Poor Plot Charity accounts to teach the village children. He was probably the Henry Bliss of Kites Hardwick listed as exempt from the hearth tax in 1670, who had been in gaol for debt some years earlier. If

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[66] WRO DR 43a/ 19 Overseers' Accounts 1655 – 1679; WRO DR 43a/20 Overseers' Accounts 1681 – 1704.
[67] Paying the poor to look after the poor was a common strategy, noted elsewhere e.g. Hindle, *On the Parish?* p. 266; Barker-Read, 'Aged poor', pp. 104-5.

so, he had 'a great charge of children to provide for', and he and Alice were frequently in receipt of poor relief in the 1660s and 1670s.[68]

Nicholas Jelly was never an inmate of the hospital, though he was supported by the almshouse charity for the last years of his life. He was in receipt of poor relief for many years, beginning when he and his wife had young children. They received regular payments for a time in 1655, and then again, in 1664, 6d. a week for eleven weeks. He was given 2s. 6d. in 1669, 'being very poore and sicke'; his wife was helped in 1672 when she was sick; and the same year the overseers paid £6 10s. 3d. for repairs to his house and for a suit of clothes for his son when he was placed apprentice. By 1674 Jelly was receiving regular relief again, and that year the overseer added an extra 9s. 4d. 'for dyet'. The overseers' accounts suggest he and his wife were living in some misery; they record expenditure on a sheet and a blanket 'to lay one them'. Jelly's wife Catherine died in 1681, by which time their regular relief had risen from 6d. a week to 1s. 6d. When the almshouse accounts commence in 1686, the hospital appears to have taken over responsibility for supporting the widower Jelly. He was receiving 1s. a week from them, and Goody Twiggar was being paid 10s. a year for his lodging. This arrangement continued until Jelly's death in 1694, when the almshouse accounts record after his last payment: 'Extraordinary Expenses about him for lodging & nursing some months before he dyed 19s. 4d.', and 'Charges in the burying him more than his clothes sold for 10s. 1d'.

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[68] WRO Dr43a/194 Poors Plot Charity 28 September 1689; Arkell & Alcock (eds), *Warwickshire Hearth Tax,* p. 282; WRO Dr43a/19 Overseers' Accounts 1655 – 1679.

Nicholas Jelly's case raises several interesting questions. Why was responsibility for supporting him transferred from the overseers to the almshouse trustees? Why did the almshouse pay his maintenance but not offer him a place? After his wife died and he was no longer able to maintain a home, a place in the almshouse might have seemed the logical progression. He was probably in his 50s or 60s by this time, and had passed into a notional category of eligibility as an elderly widower. Perhaps no place was available, although it is difficult to believe that not one vacancy arose in the eight years he lodged with Widow Twiggar. Was his long career as a parish pauper considered a bar to the respectability required of almshouse residents, or was keeping him at Goody Twiggar's merely a purely practical decision based on the amount of care he needed? Other almshouse residents such as Thomas Man had relatives living with them to look after them, and it is possible that Jelly had no-one.[69] There is also the possibility that the almshouse had insufficient accommodation for all its eight members. The hearth tax listing records only six hearths for the almshouse, which means that either some of the eight almshouse residents had to share rooms, or had to be accommodated in unheated rooms, or even had to live elsewhere, like Jelly. This is borne out by the extension to the almshouse funded by the will of Dame Dorothy Wheler in 1696, whereby two extra places for the almshouse were endowed, but four new rooms were built.[70]

Another person who was supported by the almshouse charity but not admitted to a room was Widow Benson. In 1707 the trustees ordered that 40s.

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[69] This was a common consequence of parishes apprenticing out pauper children, and may have added to poor people's vulnerability in old age. In addition, many people who reached 65 had no surviving children. Thane, 'Old people', p. 131.

[70] MacFarquhar, *Leamington Hastings*, p. 7.

be paid to John Benson, who had been keeping his mother for some time past, 'as she is now grown very Old & hath been tenant to the hospital land above these forty years'.[71] They went on to order that 30s. should be paid every half year towards her maintenance from this account, over and above the 10s. she received twice a year out of the Poors Plot charity. Her total maintenance from charitable funds of £4 a year was only a little less than she would have received in the almshouse (at that time £4 6s. 8d. a year plus fuel) and suggests that her son was expected to provide little more for her than a roof over her head.[72] The almshouse clearly had additional funds at this time, in contrast to the situation five years earlier, when they had had to keep a place empty after Mathew Over's death 'until the arrears due to the accountant are paid'.[73] The noting of Widow Benson's status as a tenant of the hospital, and the weight this seems to have carried, is typical of many almshouses of the time which favoured particular categories of tenants and retainers (usually connected to the patron's family, but in this case connected to the almshouse itself). Once again, this indicates the possibility that the early eighteenth century was a period of change in the way the almshouse was regarded and utilised, with less emphasis being placed on supporting the poorest and neediest, to be replaced by more conventional ties of patronage and influence.

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[71] WRO DR43a/195 23 October 1707.

[72] There were a number of Bensons in the parish over the period, of quite different economic status, (who were possibly only distantly related, if at all). Two Bensons are listed in the Hearth Tax returns for 1674: George, a labourer, paid tax on one hearth; Henry, a yeoman, paid on two.

[73] WRO DR43a/195 Davis Charity Accounts 1701 - 1702. This is not the same Matthew Over as the parish official earlier in the century. There were six households of Overs in the 1674 Hearth Tax, of varying economic status. Two were exempt, including a Matthew Over; three paid tax on two hearths; and another Matthew Over, a yeoman, paid tax on four.

The parish elite

The people who ran the parish were a relatively small group of better-off parishioners. Of the eighty-five householders recorded for the 1670 hearth tax assessment, just thirteen, plus the vicar, were freeholders identified in the enclosure agreement of 1665.[74] Yet these thirteen dominated the office of overseer of the poor for the parish between 1664 and 1684, with at least one of them, and frequently two, occupying the position in all but four of these twenty years. Using the hearth tax assessments once again, it is possible to see that the great majority of the householders serving as overseers at that time were assessed on two hearths or above. For the years 1664 to 1684, twenty one people who served as overseer can be positively identified from the 1674 hearth tax assessment. Of these, eighteen were assessed on two or more hearths, with three being assessed on four hearths. This is not surprising, as overseers were expected to be men of 'substantial' means who could be trusted with the parish stock.[75] If one includes the vicarage with four hearths, the manor house with eleven, and the five hearth home of John Mathews, brother to the lord's bailiff, it appears that membership of the parish elite, those who were involved in the business of parish government, would be amply demonstrated by the size of one's house.

In later years, with the survival of more records, it is possible to see at any one time a handful of the same names rotating through the offices of overseer, constable, churchwarden and charity trustee. For instance, William

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[74] Arkell & Alcock, *Warwickshire Hearth Tax*, pp. 281-2; WRO DR43a/193 Enclosure agreement 1665.
[75] Hindle, *On the Parish?* p. 257.

Cleaver, one of the more substantial freeholders, was overseer in 1667 and appointed one of the original trustees of the Poors Plot charity in 1669. His son Samuel became a trustee of the almshouse in 1693, was constable in 1695, overseer in 1698 and 1705, and churchwarden in 1711 and 1712. Thomas Watson, another trustee of the almshouse, was constable in 1678, overseer in 1683, 1684 and 1696, and churchwarden in 1684. Edmund Clarke was also a substantial freeholder and one of the original trustees of the Poors Plot charity in 1669. He also served as a trustee of the almshouse from the start of the surviving accounts in 1686 until his death in 1693. He was overseer in 1664 and 1677 and constable in 1691. He does not appear to have served as churchwarden, unsurprisingly, as he was fined for not attending church at the Easter quarter sessions in 1683, and in 1689 was granted a licence for his house to be used as a place of congregation for religious worship and a Presbyterian meeting.[76]

Edmund Clarke was clearly a respected individual who appears to have been able to work constructively alongside people of very different religious persuasion in running the affairs of the parish.[77] The vicar of the parish from 1662 until his death in 1682, for instance, was the loyal Anglican John Allington, who had been sequestered from two parishes during the civil war and Commonwealth for using the Book of Common Prayer.[78] At the Restoration he

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[76] WQS Vol. VIII, pp. 31, 43, 78, 252.

[77] He was described as 'Mr' in the hearth tax assessment, and paid tax on four hearths. Arkell & Alcock, *Warwickshire Hearth Tax*, p. 282.

[78] Allington, sequestered from Uppingham in 1646 and Oakham in 1655, called himself 'A Suffering Son of the Church of England'. He published several sermons and tracts in support of the King and the sequestered clergy, including *The Grand Conspiracy of the Members Against the Mind of Jews Against their King*, (series of four sermons, 1644 - 1649); *A Brief Apologie for*

was made a prebendary of Lincoln Cathedral, together with his appointment to Leamington Hastings.[79] His successor at Leamington Hastings, William Binckes D.D., was a high churchman and nephew of the lord of the manor.[80] As well as being the parish priest, Dr Binckes was also Dean of Lichfield from 1703 until his death in 1712. He chaired the lower house of Convocation from 1704 until 1707, and was vocal in defending the Church from dissent and heresy, though also appealing for church unity.[81] Despite his high position in the church he seems to have been actively involved in the affairs of Leamington Hastings, and was buried there. The surviving records of both the Poors Plot charity and the Davis almshouse date from shortly after his appointment, and it would appear that he initiated a review of both charities soon after his arrival and put their affairs in order. He and Edmund Clarke appear to have had a relationship of mutual respect. As Clarke was dying in 1693, Binckes visited him and took down the testament he dictated as a codicil to his will.[82]

Clarke was not the only parishioner brought before the justices for not attending church. Alongside him and his wife Mary in 1683 were another freeholder, David Ryland and his wife Mary; husbandman Thomas Isaacson and his wife Anne; and a poor man, Henry Smith. In 1686 a further group was indicted for non-attendance, including carpenter Richard Russell, and pauper

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the Sequestered Clergie, (1648); *A Continuation of the Grand Conspiracy by the Impudent Usurper and the Royal Intrudere*, (two sermons, 1654 – 1655).

[79] John Stevinson (ed.), *Leamington Hastings in an Age of Revolution* (unpublished, 1993), unpaginated.

[80] His mother was the sister of Sir Charles Wheler, who inherited the lordship from the Trevors in 1676.

[81] Tony Claydon, 'Binckes, William (bap.1653, d.1712)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2402 (accessed 4 February 2009).

[82] LRO 1693 cal. 176.31.

Nicholas Jelly, mentioned above.[83] Clarke's license for a Presbyterian meeting house in Broadwell suggests that there were a number of dissenters in the parish. In addition, one of the many John Overs in the parish was a Catholic recusant, known as John Over Papist to distinguish him from, amongst others, John Over Carpenter. He was gaoled in 1679 'being formerly indicted for refusing to take the oath of Supremacy', and was presented as a 'popish recusant' at the Easter quarter sessions in 1680.[84] He seems to have had some support in the parish, however, for John Over Carpenter, serving as constable in 1690, was himself indicted at the quarter sessions for failing to present the other John Over for being a papist.[85] Despite the orthodox Anglican credentials of the two clergymen who served the parish in the second half of the seventeenth century, it seems that amongst some parishioners at least, religious dissent in various forms was tolerated, and was apparently no bar to admission to the almshouse.[86] In the late seventeenth century more leading parishioners were involved in the office of overseer than as churchwarden, and it may be that after the bitter religious and political divisions of earlier years, managing the resources of the parish for the benefit of all parishioners was a unifying activity which involvement with the established church was no longer able to provide.[87]

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[83] WQS Vol. VIII, pp. 31; 43; 159.
[84] WQS Vol. VII, pp. 132, 180.
[85] WQS Vol. IX, p. 2.
[86] Unlike the situation dictated by Nicholas Chamberlaine at another Warwickshire parish. His almshouse at Bedworth excluded nonconformists (see chapters 3 and 4).
[87] As suggested by McIntosh for post-Reformation Hadleigh, McIntosh, 'Networks of care', p. 76. Interestingly, although repair of the parish church was one of the permitted uses set down for the Poors Plot charity, there is no evidence that its funds were ever used for this purpose.

Figure 6.5 Leamington Hastings parish church (photo: AN)

The Poors Plot Charity

The parish elite in the late seventeenth century not only controlled Humphrey Davis's almshouse, but another major parish resource, the Poors Plot charity, established as part of the enclosure agreement of 1665. This was initiated by Sir Thomas Trevor II and confirmed in a chancery decree of 1669. In this document, the twenty-seven freeholders, only half of whom lived in the parish, agreed that one acre in every yardland enclosed should be set aside for the relief of the poor.[88] This eventually provided 108 acres in two plots, which were to be free of tithes and held in trust for the relief of the poor of the parish and for other charitable uses. The trustees were to be the lord of the manor and the vicar, four local gentry and four principal freeholders. The uses of the Poors Plots charity were specified in the final agreement of 1669 as being the relief of

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[88] WRO 43a/193 Agreement to enclose the common fields of Leamington Hastings 1665.

the poor, the repair of the church, the apprenticing of poor children and the maintenance of a schoolmaster.[89]

The Poors Plots charity also absorbed the remains of the parish stock. This consisted in principle of £50 from the bequest of Thomas Squire and about £60 owed and recovered from a previous Vicar, Thomas Lever.[90] However, most of this money had either been spent on the costs of bringing the suit in Chancery to recover the Davis Hospital lands, or had been lost through being lent out to parishioners who had subsequently died insolvent (a common occurrence for such loan charities).[91] Between 1677 and 1680 the trustees of the Poors Plot lands experimented by letting out one of the two plots to ten labourers from Broadwell 'to make the best of itt to their owne benefitt', but this had not been a success. The labourers were supposed to pay rent for each animal they grazed there, but the men 'broke their words' and failed to pay the charges. After this experiment the plots were let conventionally and the rents distributed by the trustees. At Christmas 1681 the trustees recorded that they had distributed £31 over the previous three years to 'severall widdowes children and day labourers'.

In 1683 the trustees decided that the Poors Plot and the Hospital should have the same trustees, although separate accounts would be kept. From the

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[89] The original agreement drawn up in 1665 at the start of the enclosure negotiations had specified a wider range of uses, including repairs to highways and bridges, the marriage of poor maids, and the payment of Fifteenths and setting out soldiers.

[90] Thomas Lever was vicar of Leamington Hastings from 1619 – 1639. From 1628 he was also Rector of the neighbouring parish of Stockton. According to the Chancery Confirmation Order in the Davis case, at the time of that inquisition (1633), Thomas Lever was in possession of £40 due to the poor of Leamington Hastings which he had been ordered to pay by the Diocesan Court because of non-residence. The chancery decree included the recovery of this money with interest. NA C90/6.

[91] WRO DR43a/194 Poor Plot Charity. Opening statement 'As for and concerning the parish stocke…'. The remaining money was let out at interest as bonds.

Poors Plot records it seems that the trustees met once or twice a year to make decisions about the distribution of the proceeds. Frequently this involved paying for apprenticeships for poor children, usually the children of widows, but not necessarily those on parish relief.[92] In addition, as well as making occasional payments to people in need, each year an agreed sum was given to the overseers of the poor to distribute to a number of poor parishioners specified on a list drawn up for the purpose. In some years the local trustees (that is, the leading parishioners rather than the gentry trustees) were also authorised to make emergency payments if circumstances were 'particularly necessitous', or the curate was authorised to purchase coal for distribution to poor people in the winter. The purchase of wool, hemp, flax and wheels was also made in some years to assist the poor who would otherwise be unable to work. The regular disbursements were made by the overseers, demonstrating how enmeshed parish resources were at this time.

In most years the distribution was made just twice a year, for example in 1688 on 17 July and St Thomas' Day (21 December), but in 1683 the trustees decided that on every Sunday between All Saints Day and Easter Day, twenty shillings would be distributed at church 'by sixpences and shillings' to those whose names appeared on a list prepared beforehand. Those not at church to receive it, without reasonable excuse, would lose their payment.[93] It is possible that the lists of named individuals were selected by the trustees; if this were the case it appears to have been a contentious decision. A curious note by the

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[92] John Allington, vicar, also left £10 in his will of 1683 to add twenty shillings a time to each forty shillings laid out by the Poors Plot in apprenticeships until the sum was used up. NA Prob/11/373.
[93] Ibid.

curate in the accounts seems to indicate some independence on the part of the local parish officials, suggesting that the trustees (half of whom were neighbouring gentry rather than residents of the parish) were only responsible for managing the charity's assets, not the disbursements.[94]

The overseers were expected to account for the expenditure and enter 'into their bookes' the names of those receiving assistance and the respective amounts.[95] For two years (1686/7 and 1687/8) the actual list of names appears in the overseers' accounts for that year, but after this they merely record the total sum given them by the trustees and the amount disbursed, for instance in 1690/91, 'received and distributed by order of the Trustees £10 7s.'.[96] A total of thirty two people appear on the list for 1686/7, receiving amounts varying from 15s. down to just 2s. Twelve recipients were widows; the remainder were probably poor labourers such as William Chittam (mentioned above), who received 3s. 6d. Three people on the list that year were also in receipt of parish poor relief: Widow Over was given 2s. 6d., Joseph Turner 6s., and Nicholas Jelly (mentioned above) received 5s., but Jelly's payment was specified as being for fuel. The following year the list contains the same names, minus Nicholas Jelly, but with seven additional names, including at least two more who were on regular parish relief. As with the names of those exempt from the

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[94] The note inserted in the minutes of 8 April 1685 by the curate John Garrett, seemingly on his own initiative, states: 'Memorandum that the Trustees for the charitable use named on the Preceedent page, take care only of the Land given to the Maintenance of Mr Davis's Hospitall & the two plots of Ground … given to charitable uses. The charitable stock in money for the said parishe is under the care & management of the Overseers of the poor of Leamington aforesaid for the Time Being. This memorandum without order from or Privity [?] of the Trustees aforesaid was intred by me John Garrett, thereby hoping to Prevent Mistake and Differences for the time to come'. WRO DR43a/194.

[95] Ibid., Minute of 18 March 1687.

[96] WRO DR43a/20.

hearth tax, it is impossible to know just how poor the recipients of the annual disbursements were; many were probably on the margins of poverty, getting by through a variety of means. Also, one cannot tell what particular circumstances prompted the trustees to authorize a payment of 15s. to Nicholas Twiggar and 10s. each to the widows Whitehead and Hawten, when most recipients were awarded much smaller amounts.[97] But it seems clear at least that in the early years of the charity there was no discrimination against those in receipt of parish relief. In fact it seems that the charitable funds were used to assist a wide range of poor people, variously including almshouse residents, parish paupers, and those not on relief.

As well as the disbursements given to the overseers, the Poors Plot accounts record the occasional payments made to those in need. In 1688, for example, Joseph Turner received a further 7s. 'when sick', and Mary Cox received 6s. 'for cloaths'. Turner had already received a payment of 10s. in 1685, and was on the lists as receiving 6s. in 1686/7 and 6s. 6d. in 1687/8. In 1687 Turner started to receive regular parish relief. He died in 1688, so it is possible that the additional payment from the Poors Plot charity that year, on top of his poor relief, was for additional expenses in his final illness. Paying for additional care for people when ill occurs frequently in the records. Goody Rushall, for example, one of the almshouse inhabitants, had an additional shilling a week on top of her hospital stipend allocated from the Poors Plot in 1698 until her death in 1699, 'as expended on the looking after Goody Rushall

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[97] Widow Hawten was admitted to the almshouse in place of Ann Tue in 1688. WRO DR43a/195.

during her lunacy more than her hospital pay'. When her goods were sold after her death, it was the Poors Plot rather than the almshouse which received the partial reimbursement.[98] In 1708, Ann Dury was granted ten shillings, and a further one pound in 1709, 'for [th]e care of her mother by reason of her great age'. Also in 1708 Goody Man, described as a 'member' of the almshouse, was paid sixpence a week out of the Poors Plot 'for nursing Old Goody Hawten' (another almshouse resident), 'the same to be repaid out of Hawten's goods when she dyes'.[99]

Specialist nursing care or accommodation beyond what was available in the village also seems to have been purchased using the Poors Plot resources. As well as paying Mr Chebsey of Rugby 'for his care of Sam. Benson & that he may be encouraged to make a cure' (1708), John Benson of the neighbouring parish of Bourton-on-Dunsmore was paid in 1709 to look after not only his own mother but also Widow Mathewes. By 1712 Widow Mathewes was being lodged with a person by the name of Shaw in Coventry, where she died the following year. The Poors Plot paid £3 7s. 6d. for her lodgings there for two and a quarter years, and £1 5s. 'to buy her fewel & for other necessarys when she was sick'.[100] This was Faith Mathewes, widow of Thomas Mathewes, who had been Sir Thomas Trevor's agent. She was listed in the parish register as a member of the almshouse when she died, although not living there. She presumably received the hospital stipend in addition to the Poors Plot funding. Similarly, a payment of 10s. was made in 1712 by the Poors Plot trustees to Griffin Fennel,

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[98] WRO DR43a/194.

[99] Jane Man appears to have achieved respectability at last, with the epithet 'Goody'. She was now aged 50, and clearly making herself useful in the almshouse.

[100] WRO DR43a/194, 1712 - 1713.

with whom Susannah Isaackson was lodged, to buy her some clothes. Susannah's lodgings with Griffin Fennel had been paid by the overseers out of parish poor relief since 1694, and the expense was considerable. In 1694/5 the overseers had paid £5 for her keep and £1 7s. 7d. for clothing. In 1696/7 the overseer claimed a shilling 'spent when I did bargain with Griffin Fennel' for £5 for the coming year.[101] This suggests a more professional, commercial transaction, different from the usual boarding out of paupers in the parish with poor widows glad of the additional income. In fact, 'farmer' Griffin Fennel of Harbury was Susannah's brother-in-law.[102] It is possible that Susannah was disabled, and that Fennel made his living by taking in people requiring care. In 1703 Susannah was 'admitted' to the almshouse, although remaining with Griffin Fennel, presumably to take advantage of the hospital stipend and relieve the burden on the parish.[103]

These examples show the Poors Plot charity funds being used in a very flexible way to meet exceptional needs, with the funding often being used in tandem with parish poor relief or almshouse resources for particular individuals. The total amounts expended each year were considerable, in some years equaling or exceeding the amounts paid in parish relief. Table 6.1 shows the amounts between 1690 and 1693 given to the overseers by the trustees for distribution to the poor, compared with the amounts raised in those years by parish relief.

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[101] WRO DR43a/20 Overseers' accounts.
[102] Fennel's wife Ursula was granted letters of administration in 1692 when her father Thomas Isaac(son) died intestate. LRO 1692 cal.364.18.
[103] WRO DR43a/195. Davis Hospital minutes, 1703: Susannah Isaacson 'to succeed Mathew Over'.

Table 6.1 Expenditure on the poor			
Year	Poors Plot	Parish Relief	Total
1690-1	£15 3s. 6d.	£11 18s. 0d. (2 levies)	£27 1s. 6d.
1691-2	£13 3s. 0d.	£17 17s. 0d. (3 levies)	£31 0s. 0d.
1692-3	£13 6s. 0d.	£12 5s. 4d. (2 levies)	£25 11s. 4d

Source: WRO Dr43a/194 Poors Plot Charity; WRO Dr43a/20 Overseers' Accounts 1681 - 1704

From these amounts it is clear that the Poors Plot charity made a significant contribution to poor relief in the parish. Both the regular and exceptional disbursements would have made a considerable difference to those poor people who received them, and most probably relieved the parish of a considerable amount in poor relief payments. Whether the sums received actually compensated individual cottagers for their loss of access to common rights at enclosure is impossible to calculate. What the charity did do, as Buchanan Sharp has suggested, was provide another arena for better off householders in Leamington Hastings to be involved in the administration of parish affairs, and to control aspects of the lives of their poorer neighbours, however benevolent their intentions.[104] The payments from the Poors Plot charity were not a right, and recipients could not rely on receiving them. The trustees had to ensure the receipt of the rents before disbursements could be made, and sometimes tenants of the plots were in arrears, as in 1718 when the tenant owed two years' rent. In the financial crisis of 1696, the trustees acknowledged that they were not able to make the usual distribution, but guaranteed instead to arrange for

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[104] Buchanan Sharp, 'Common Rights, Charities and the Disorderly Poor', in Geoff Eley and William Hunt (eds), *Reviving the English Revolution. Reflections and elaborations on the work of Christopher Hill* (London & New York, 1988), pp. 107-137.

'coal or wood or credit for bread'.[105] An individual's lack of deference could, moreover, result in the loss of a payment, as in 1719 when the trustees ordered £10 to be distributed on New Years Day 'excepting only that John Over of Bradwell shall have no share of this mony as well because he very unthankfully refus'd wt was offord him in [th]e last distribution as because he has of late behav'd himself very ill in other respects'.[106]

Eligibility could be determined and, more importantly, changed by the trustees. Whereas the early disbursements appear to have been made to a range of poor people, including those receiving parish relief, the minutes in 1696 state that the purpose of the charity was 'to keep persons from coming upon the parish', although this was not specified in the founding agreement. Later pronouncements, for example in 1717, reserve the distribution for those 'as do not receive Collection'.[107] Although it is impossible to ascertain to what degree this was implemented, as subsequent lists of recipients have not survived, this pronouncement does mark a clear change in policy. The distinction in the minds of the governing elite between charity and poor relief developed during the course of the seventeenth century, as central government, local magistrates and commissioners for charitable uses all emphasised that charitable endowments were distinct from, and should not be used to subsidise, the poor rates.[108] This proposed discrimination by the trustees of the Poors Plot represented a newly condemnatory attitude in this parish towards those on poor relief, but one which was entirely typical of the condemnatory rhetoric of the time.

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[105] WRO DR43a/194 Poors Plot Charity, 23 June 1696.
[106] Ibid., 23 December 1719. Cf. Hindle, *On the Parish?* pp. 387-390.
[107] WRO DR43a/194 Poors Plot Charity, October 1717.
[108] See the discussion in Hindle, *On the Parish?* pp. 142-6.

Parish housing

A final major resource used to assist the poor in Leamington Hastings was housing provided by the parish. The national framework of parish poor relief established by the Elizabethan poor laws of 1597 and 1601 included the responsibility of parishes to provide accommodation for poor people, and oversight by Justices of the Peace to ensure that parishes were exercising their responsibilities appropriately (see chapter 2). Surviving Quarter Session records of the seventeenth century provide many examples of justices intervening in contested poor relief cases and settlement disputes. The Warwickshire Quarter Session Order Books survive from 1625 and include hundreds of examples of the justices making habitation orders, requiring the overseers in a particular parish to provide a 'house habitable and fit for a Christian'.[109] There are several entries for Leamington Hastings which pre-date the commencement of the surviving overseers' accounts in 1655. In 1630, for instance, Joan Biddle, by agreement with the parish, offered her goods to the overseers in return for habitation and maintenance.[110] Other cases give an indication of how this parish, like many others of the time, attempted to rid itself of inhabitants likely to become a burden on the poor rates. In 1649 two widows, Joan Andrews and Eleanor Thompson, were indicted for keeping inmates.[111] Joan Andrews had her daughter living with her while her son-in-law, Thomas Hawten (or Horten), was away as a Parliamentary soldier. When he returned to live with Joan the parish tried to eject him and his wife. The Justices supported Hawten against

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[109] WQS Vol. I, p. 81 etc.
[110] Ibid., p. 100.
[111] WQS Vol. VI, p.90.

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the overseers, and ordered that he be permitted to remain.[112] He worked as a slaymaker, but appears to have been always poor.[113] He was exempt from the hearth tax in 1674. Joan Andrews received regular poor relief from 1655 until 1662, the date she was possibly admitted to the almshouse (she died there in 1683). Hawten also died in 1683. His widow was herself admitted to the almshouse five years later, and died there 'aged 94' in 1708.[114]

The justices went further with Eleanor Thompson. Her son William and his family were initially ordered to be sent back to the neighbouring parish of Birdingbury, but this was reversed at Easter 1650 when his settlement was ordered in Leamington Hastings. At Trinity 1650 the justices ordered the overseers 'forthwith' to provide him with 'an house wherein he may live and follow his trade'. The order was repeated at Michaelmas, with the threat that the overseers would be bound over if they did not comply.[115] Nothing further is heard of William Thompson, but a widow Tompson, possibly his mother or his wife, began to receive poor relief in 1672 and was exempt from the Hearth Tax in 1674.[116]

It is not possible to determine how the overseers met their obligation to house Thompson, but a little more information is available in the case of Joseph Turner, a labourer. At Epiphany 1652 the overseers were ordered to provide habitation for Joseph Turner, described as an inhabitant but 'destitute of an

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[112] WQS Vol. II, p. 255.

[113] A slaymaker worked in the textile industry, making tools for weaving. Liz Newman, 'Deserted Medieval Villages', paper given to Warmington Heritage Group, Warwickshire, 10 May 2010. http://www.warmingtonheritage.com/publications/research-projects/deserted-medieval-villages/ (accessed 16 December 2013).

[114] WRO DR43a/195 Davis Hospital accounts.

[115] WQS Vol. III, pp. 2, 25, 36.

[116] WRO DR43a/19; QS 11/56.

habitation'. He was to pay 'a moderate rent'. At Michaelmas he was recorded as being provided with a house, for which he was paying 40s. a year. The overseers were demanding security for the rent, but this was refused by the justices. The demand for security suggests that the parish owned or had taken on the lease of the property he had been assigned.[117] Despite the overseers' misgivings, Turner seems to have just about managed with this arrangement for many years. But he needed poor relief in 1672, was exempt from the Hearth Tax in 1674, and appeared among the people paid by the overseers for boarding Ann Tue that year. In October 1687 he started to receive regular poor relief of 2s. 6d. a week, as well as grants from the Poors Plot charity (see previous section). The overseers also paid £1 3s. 4d. to repair his house, suggesting that it was probably parish property.[118] Turner died the following year, and his widow was given leave to live in the almshouse 'till a place shall fall' (in other words without the stipend). This arrangement would have freed up their house for another parish pauper. On the death in 1689 of Widow Dury, one of the almshouse inhabitants, Widow Turner was 'admitted to her whole pay'.[119]

How the Leamington Hastings overseers acquired the property to house parish paupers, or what form it took, cannot be ascertained from the records, although there is evidence available from parishes elsewhere. For instance, in the Essex Quarter Sessions Order Book for 1652 to 1661 there are a number of examples of the overseers contracting with owners to rent houses and

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[117] WQS Vol. III, pp. 98, 131.
[118] WRO DR43a/19; DR43a/20; QS 11/56.
[119] WRO DR43a/195.

tenements in which to place the parish poor.[120] No rent payments are recorded in the surviving Leamington Hastings overseers' accounts, but from 1655 onwards there are many records of payments for repairs to houses. Sometimes the people living in them, like Joseph Turner, were not on regular relief. John Man, for example, had his house repaired in 1660 at a cost of 14s., and the repairs to the house of the Gulliams, mother and daughter, cost 11s. 2d. in 1663. It is possible that Widow Joan Guilliams is Joan Gill, listed as one of the freeholders in the enclosure agreement of 1665, in which case the overseers' contribution towards repairing the house is an indication of how poor she and her daughter were. Joan's daughter Marjorie is listed as an exempt householder in the hearth tax assessment of 1670, suggesting she had inherited the house on her mother's death.[121] In some cases, however, the sums expended were quite considerable, which would seem to indicate that the parish owned and was prepared to invest in the property. For instance, the overseers paid out £5 9s. 5d. for repairing Nicholas Jelly's house in 1672. Widow Anne Tarsey, who, like Jelly, was on regular relief, had her house repaired at a cost of £4 4s. 0d. in 1661; another 16s. was spent on repairs in 1664; and again £1 3s. 6d. in 1669.[122] Set against the usual amounts paid for weekly relief (6d. a week rising to 1s. 6d. a week in the 1660s for Widow Tarsey, shillings and sixpences in the 1670s to Nicholas Jelly) these sums are very considerable, and indicate the importance the parish accorded its investment. Economic historians have

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[120] D.H. Allen (ed.), 'Essex Quarter Sessions Order Book 1652 – 1661',*Essex Edited Texts,* vol. I (Chelmsford, 1974), p. 27 (Coe); p. 94 (Tarling); p. 144 (Blakemore). I am grateful to Bernard Capp for bringing these references to my attention.
[121] WRO Dr43a/19 Overseers' Accounts 1655 - 1679; WRO 43a/193 Agreement to enclose the common fields of Leamington Hastings 1665; Arkell & Alcock, *Warwickshire Hearth Tax*, p. 282.
[122] WRO Dr43a/19 Overseers' Accounts 1655 - 1679.

calculated that property owners of the seventeenth century needed to allow an annual sum of ten to eleven per cent of the value of the property to maintain small farms in good repair.[123] This does not necessarily imply that vernacular architecture was essentially flimsy; but the timber, mud and thatch construction of most rural buildings, while perfectly serviceable, required regular maintenance to keep it weatherproof.[124]

From the examples above it appears that the parish of Leamington Hastings had built up a stock of housing by the time the overseers' accounts begin in 1655. There are no recorded habitation orders for the parish after 1652, perhaps because by this stage the parish could anticipate the line the justices were likely to take and had the resources available to meet their obligations. Certainly with Alice Pedley, 'a poor inhabitant, sick, with four small children', the overseers exceeded the order of the justices in 1660 to pay her maintenance of 10d. a week, by providing her with a house as well.[125] Alice's husband William had died in 1656, leaving her with four daughters, the youngest only two years old. Why the matter of her support should have come before the justices is not known, but once the maintenance order was made the parish mobilised to care for her. The overseers paid for her to be lodged, first with Adam Oakley, then with Thomas Hincks. Meanwhile, a house was 'built' for her. Nathaniel Pedley and other workmen were paid a total of £1 7s. 2d. in 1661 for 'building the

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[123] Christopher Clay, 'Landlords and Estate management in England', in Joan Thirsk (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales Volume V* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 247. According to archaeologists, medieval peasants' homes required rebuilding at least once a generation, M. Beresford & J.G. Hurst, *Deserted Medieval Villages* (Gloucester 1971, 3rd ed. 1989), p. 77. The consequence of inadequate building and repairs was demonstrated when the end room of South Ormsby's poor house 'fell down in the winter of 1672 - 3', M.W. Barley, *The English Farmhouse and Cottage* (London, 1961), p. 208.
[124] Tankard, 'Cottage building', p. 32.
[125] WQS IV, 1660 Trinity, p. 127.

Widdow Pedley houes'. Other items of expenditure included 4s. for 'four tunne of winding and tooe tunne of lath', 5s. 6d. for 'carridge for wood and earth and for three bunches of windinges', and 1s. for 'drawing a leaisee'.[126] This relatively small expenditure suggests that the accommodation was not a cottage built from scratch, but perhaps the conversion of an outbuilding. In 1662 the overseers paid John Mathews 10s. 'for Widdow Pedler cowes graseing' indicating that she had previously had a smallholding, (and had perhaps become too ill to keep it on or had been evicted), and was now in accommodation with no access to land or common.[127]

Her lease for the new house has not survived, but may well have included not only the conditions of the tenancy but also the agreement for her maintenance. When she died in 1663 all her possessions were sold by the overseers. They came to £4 11s. 7d. in total. The annual accounts for 1663 refer to 13s. 6d. 'laid out more than the goods of the Widow Pedler did amount two'. Her possessions suggest that Widow Pedley had known slightly better times, and this may have been the reason the overseers had been initially reluctant to support her. As well as two small bonnets sold for 2s. 6d., the items included a bed sold for 13s., sheets, blankets and pillows, including two feather pillows and a feather bolster sold for 13s., but also more meagre items such as an old chair sold for 6d., an old churn and a chest without a lid.[128]

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[126] WRO Dr43a/19 Overseers' Accounts 1655 - 1679, pp. 11, 12 (1661).
[127] The importance of owning a cow or smallholding for the survival of poor widows has been ably demonstrated by Tim Wales' examination of the poor lists for the Norfolk town of Cawston in 1601, Wales, 'Life-cycle', pp. 370-1.
[128] Apart from the bonnets, no clothes are mentioned. Presumably Widow Pedley's clothes were kept and passed on to her daughters. See Peter King, 'Pauper Inventories and the Material Lives of the Poor in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries', in Tim Hitchcock, Peter

Unlike many other parishes, the Leamington Hastings overseers' accounts do not include any evidence of rents paid, which suggests that the houses in which they placed paupers were either owned by the parish, or being provided by a landowner rent free, perhaps in return for the parish keeping the property repaired. From the simultaneous repairs listed for several properties in some years it would appear that the parish had more than one property at its disposal.[129] The parish not only seems to have owned its own property portfolio, but to have been involved in managing where poor people lived. For instance, the overseers had paid 14s. to repair John Man's house in 1660 when he was not on regular relief. He had occasional relief owing to sickness in 1669, and in 1673 the overseers paid Thomas Mathews (Sir Thomas Trevor's agent) 12s. 6d. 'for letting John Man remove his house'. They also gave John Man 3s. 'when his house was building'. From 1674 he appears to have received regular relief for at least the next ten years. Why he should have wanted, or needed, to move is not known, but the assistance of the parish in the arrangement suggests it was not a frivolous move and may have resulted in a more suitable property being released for someone else.

Managing the placement of poor people in suitable properties is also evident in the request recorded at the Trinity Quarter Sessions in 1696 for Mary Makepeace, 'a poor widow', to be placed in a cottage formerly erected on the waste at Hardwick Green 'late in the occupation of Elizabeth Over, widow'. Mr

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King & Pamela Sharpe (eds), *Chronicling Poverty: The voices and strategies of the English poor, 1640 – 1840* (Basingstoke, 1997), pp. 155-191.
[129] For instance, 1661 Widow Tarsey and Widow Pedley's houses, WRO DR43a/19; 1687 William Turner's house, Benson's house and Widow Over's house; 1700 repairs to houses of John Benson, Mary Mann, William Turner and Mary Tarsey, WRO DR43a/20.

Mathews, bailiff to the lord of the manor, confirmed his master's consent to this arrangement at the Michaelmas session.[130] This cottage appears to have been maintained by the parish during Elizabeth Over's tenancy, even possibly built at parish expense. The two loads of earth required for repairs in 1687 suggest it had been simply built of mud construction, as was common at the time in rural areas. When Widow Over vacated the cottage in 1696 to move into the almshouse, the overseers expended £7 3s. 9d. on considerable improvements to the property, including the use of timber, bricks and glazing, before paying a shilling to have Widow Makepeace's possessions conveyed there.[131] Improving the cottage in this way was presumably a more secure investment for the parish once its existence had been regularised by the court.

While some houses appear to have been built with the assistance of the parish, others may have been pulled down, as landowners took steps to control poor people's access to housing (and also, by implication, settlement).[132] In 1635, a group of men were fined in the manorial court for breaking in the door one Sunday of a house erected on the waste, and putting Thomas Garrett in possession of it.[133] John Over of Broadwell was presented at the Epiphany Quarter Sessions in 1662 for erecting a cottage without the requisite four acres.[134] The overseers' accounts for 1661-2 include expenditure of 1s. 6d. 'for going to the Justices with the witness conserninge pluckeng downe the house',

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[130] WQS Vol. IX, pp. 133, 141.
[131] WRO DR43a/20. Overseers' accounts.
[132] As described by Broad, 'Housing'.
[133] WRO CR1319/119. Copy of entries in the manorial court rolls.
[134] WQS Vol. VI, p. 139.

which may relate to this episode.[135] Sir William Wheler, the lord of the manor, demolished some tenements in Broadwell in 1696 and gave the building materials to the almshouse to build new tenements on their land. It was not, therefore, only through the settlement legislation that the parish elite could determine where and how the poor should live.

Conclusion

The purpose of this case study was to use the evidence from one Warwickshire parish to explore the context within which a single almshouse was founded and managed, including what other resources were available to the parish and how these were utilised. By bringing together and examining information from a range of seventeenth-century records, it has been possible to build up a suggestive picture of how, in this parish, the housing needs of some of the poor were met, and how the operation of the almshouse fitted within this overall perspective. The survival of both the overseers' accounts and the minutes of the almshouse trustees shows how the same individual might be housed at different times in their life in lodgings, then provided with a parish house, and ultimately a room in the almshouse. For some there might even be a stage beyond the almshouse, receiving specialist nursing care in someone's home.

The parish elite, in the second half of the seventeenth century, appear to have managed the resources of the parish in a fairly pragmatic way, drawing upon whatever was available regardless of technical responsibilities. For instance, the overseers used parish relief to pay for catching sparrows, which was the responsibility of the churchwardens; the almshouse paid for people not

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[135] WRO DR43a/19. Overseers' accounts.

actually in the almshouse, reducing their need for parish relief; and the Poors Plot charity provided additional assistance to those on relief or in the almshouse, as well as supporting those not on relief. As the source of all their resources was the parishioners themselves, or previous generations of them, this must have seemed perfectly reasonable. Local decisions were overseen by the justices of the peace who signed off the overseers' accounts, and by the local gentry who occasionally attended meetings as charity trustees. There were periodic interventions by order of Quarter Sessions, but on the whole the local officials acted with a great deal of autonomy in managing the affairs of this small 'welfare republic'. In fact, the officials may have tried to ensure that there was as little outside intervention as possible: the overseers gave William Rushall an extra five shillings in 1673 'to keepe him from going for more colection'.[136] The limitation of the records, of course, is that only those who were assisted appear in the accounts; it is usually not possible to see what claims were rejected or whose needs were not met. There is also a suggestion that the end of the period might have seen the beginnings of a distinction between the recipients of private charity and poor relief, for instance by the restriction of the Poors Plot charity to those not on poor relief, and the admission of better-off people to the almshouse. Yet, even with these caveats, the picture that emerges is a fairly inclusive one, with little evidence of decisions being made on the basis of patronage or discrimination. For example, a range of very different people seem to have been accepted into the almshouse: William Chittam the bird catcher;

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[136] Ibid.

Goody Twiggar the innkeeper's widow; Jane Man the unmarried mother; and even the troublesome William Rushall.

The evidence obtained has thus shown the benefits of adopting Broad's 'holistic approach'. Examining the records together rather than in isolation has revealed not only the links between the ways the different types of provision were used, but also the networks and overlap between the people making the decisions. There was evidence of conflict and dissent within the parish at times, but generally this seems to have been outweighed by a commitment to work together for the overall benefit of the parish. Perhaps, as McIntosh suggested for Hadleigh, implementing a policy of parish welfare itself promoted a sense of community.[137] This is not to underestimate, however, the deeply paternalistic nature of that community. The decisions made on behalf of the poor by the parish elite were by no means altruistic, and much of the 'management' of the parish resources entailed managing the poor also. The generous disbursements from the Poors Plot charity were no doubt of great help to the poor and those at the margins of poverty, so long as they, unlike the John Over mentioned earlier, showed due deference and gratitude. The pragmatic decisions about the use of resources not only benefited poorer parishioners but ratepayers as well, who could be confident that the needs of the poor would be met without overburdening their better-off neighbours. The co-operation amongst the freeholders which had resulted in the enclosure of the open fields in 1665 was itself the act which had simultaneously deprived the poor of their ancient rights and placed the resulting charitable funds, through the creation of the Poors Plot

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[137] McIntosh, 'Networks of care', p. 76.

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charity, into the hands of the parish elite, to be controlled by them and dispensed at their pleasure.

Humphrey Davis's almshouse, too, was a part of the support network controlled by the better-off parishioners. The almshouse made a genuine contribution within the range of resources available for the poor in the locality, and, at least in the second half of the seventeenth century, the trustees appear to have operated a surprisingly inclusive admissions policy in a model of benevolence which may well have been replicated elsewhere. This benevolence, however, was not guaranteed, and there are suggestions in the records by the end of the period that attitudes towards the poor in Leamington Hastings might have been hardening in line with contemporary public opinion.

7. CONCLUSION

'An unsatisfactory form of charity', or 'a touchstone of concern for life-cycle poverty'?[1]

This project set out to examine early modern almshouses not as interesting but isolated institutions, but rather within the wider context of the range of welfare provision available in early modern England. The objectives were to explore the place of almshouses in the developing welfare systems of the time; to assess the contribution they may have made; and to attempt to account for their enduring popularity as a particular form of charity. Although historians of the late medieval period usually include almshouses as part of the range of provision available to meet the needs of the poor, post-Reformation almshouses have generally been viewed as operating outside the framework of statutory poor relief in England, and as making little contribution towards the support of the genuinely poor and needy.[2] The standard portrayal of the almshouse is thus of a quaint but largely irrelevant institution, providing care and shelter for a small number of respectable, privileged elderly people, participants in a living tableau of traditional beneficence amongst attractive heritage buildings. This cosy image proved to be remarkably enduring, and is only very recently becoming subject to challenge.[3] The findings of this project, however, demonstrate the

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[1] Walter Sherburne Prideaux, clerk of the Goldsmith's Company, recommending in 1890 that the Bowes almshouses in Woolwich should not be rebuilt, cited by Charlie MacKeith, 'The Christopher Boone almshouse charity in Lee: a study of poor relief and almshouse traditions in the Blackheath Hundred', paper given to the Almshouses in Europe conference, Haarlem, The Netherlands, 8 September 2011; McIntosh, 'Local responses', p. 221.

[2] McIntosh, *Poor Relief, pp.* 59-94; 186-224; Dyer, 'Poverty and its relief', pp. 45-6, 62.

[3] See, for instance, the title and content of Mary Raphael's travelogue, *The Romance of English Almshouses,* published appropriately by Mills and Boon (London, 1926). The

remarkable diversity of early modern almshouses, and how far removed from the conventional portrayal the majority of them were.

The continuum of experience described by Tomkins in relation to eighteenth-century almshouse life applies equally to other features of early modern almshouses, such as the many variations in the form and function of foundations; in the governance arrangements; and in the social and economic standing of the occupants.[4] At one end of this continuum sit the stereotypical foundations described above: the well-known, wealthy institutions such as the Lord Leycester Hospital at Warwick or Trinity Hospital, Greenwich, established by high status individuals in grand or interesting buildings, providing a comfortable, well-ordered existence for a carefully selected group of privileged almspeople. Often such institutions were incorporated and largely self-governing, admitting almspeople who were not necessarily destitute, or those who came from outside the immediate locality, and operating independently of the statutory welfare framework. At the opposite end of the continuum would be found simple, unendowed rows of cottages, such as the Bleachfield and Priory almshouses in Alcester, Warwickshire, donated by better-off parishioners and townspeople and managed by the parish officers, inhabited rent-free by a small number of local poor people, and with no overt rules or communal life. Sometimes the only feature which appears to distinguish these unendowed almshouses from other parish or town housing is in their origin as the specific gift of a named individual. The hundreds of other early modern almshouses which ranged along the continuum between these two extremes, exhibit a

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'comfortable and positive image' of almshouse life has recently been revised by Tomkins, 'Retirement'.
[4] Tomkins, 'Retirement', p. 264.

variety of features in different combinations: some were wholly under the control of the founder's heirs, some were managed by a body of independent trustees, and others by town officials or the minister and churchwardens; some gave their occupants a comfortable existence, with servants, stipends, clothing and fuel provided, while others had small or non-existent stipends and no additional benefits; at some almshouses the occupants were expected to work, but others were intended for those who were incapable of work; some almspeople were subject to onerous rules and on-site supervision, while others led unrestricted lives in comparative freedom. At some almshouses spouses and children were permitted, at others they were prohibited; people in receipt of parish relief might be supported in some establishments, while at others they were refused admission. Almost any attempt at categorisation seems destined to fail in the face of such diversity.

This diversity in itself was one of the factors contributing to the continuing popularity of almshouses as a form of philanthropy, despite the considerable resources required of benefactors. The flexibility of the form lent itself to a number of different models, and could usefully combine the resources of public and private charity in a way which felt completely natural. Donors were able to personalise the provision if they wished, by specifying for whom their almshouse was intended, what would be provided there, and even the exact specification of the building itself.[5] In the many almshouses where the donor had not specified the form the institution was to take, however, those running and using the almshouse were able continually to shape and reshape the provision according to their own needs and priorities,

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[5] For example, Lady Katherine Leveson's very detailed instructions for the building of her hospital at Temple Balsall, Warwickshire. WRO CR112/Ba177/1 Agreement for Building the First Hospital.

as these changed over time.[6] The people who founded and administered almshouses were a more diverse group than the merchant aristocracy and landowning nobility and gentry described by Jordan, and the motives which inspired them seem to have been equally various. Many founders were pursuing an agenda which was principally about personal reputation and memorialisation; others were attempting to respond to social need, in response to contemporary anxieties and debates. For some, however, the motivation appears to have been the creation of an idealised model community which went beyond the practical manifestation of private benevolence for a few carefully selected individuals, and reflected instead a more abstract but still powerful concept of an imagined, ordered and disciplined Christian society (figure 7.1).
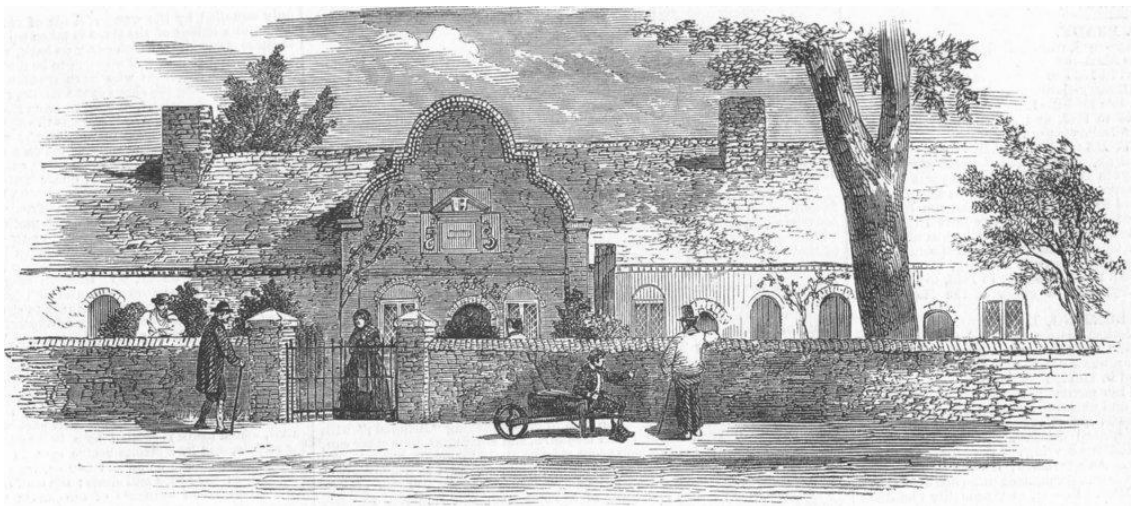
Figure 7.1 The Holte almshouses at Aston, Birmingham, wood engraved print, unsigned (1858)

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[6] Sir William Pritchard's bequest to the parish in 1697 of the Old Market House in Rope Yard, Woolwich, for example, which was originally used as an almshouse for eight aged and impotent poor, was transformed into a workhouse in 1731, MacKeith, 'Boone almshouse charity', p. 6.

Although the study emphasises the central place of philanthropy, private charity and poor relief were necessarily enmeshed. The project has demonstrated how deeply almshouses were embedded, both conceptually and in practice, in the welfare systems of the time. Initially at least, at a policy level it seems that almshouses were viewed as an essential part of a national system of institutional relief, as indicated in the Elizabethan legislation discussed in chapter 2. A number of early benefactors such as Sir Roger Manwood and William Lambarde appear to have been consciously following the contemporary policy agenda, and this motivation can too easily be overlooked when the emphasis is placed on personal memorialisation. Robert Dudley's foundation at Warwick was not only an opportunity to impress the Queen and his rivals, but to show the lead in meeting the needs of disabled soldiers, who were considered to contribute to the problem of vagrancy in Elizabethan England. It may even have been the forerunner of a conscious attempt to create a national network of such establishments, as an inquiry by Burghley in 1593 demonstrated the inadequacy of the existing provision for disabled soldiers.[7] Although neither Elizabeth nor the early Stuarts founded almshouses themselves, both she and James I authorised the re-founding of many medieval almshouses, such as Sherburn Hospital in County Durham and St Edmund's Hospital in Gateshead, which ensured their survival. Again, under Charles II there was a further, ineffectual, government attempt to commandeer places in almshouses for disabled soldiers and seamen. This failed because the management of most

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[7] Slack, *Reformation*, p. 56. As examples, Christ's Hospital, Buckingham, was founded by royal charter in 1598 for 36 maimed and unmarried soldiers, to be followed by Coningsby's Company of Old Servitors in Hereford in 1612. Browne Willis, *The History and Antiquities of the town, hundred and deanery of Buckingham* (London, 1755), p. 86 fn. 413; Prescott, *English Medieval Hospital,* p. 128.

almshouses lay outside government control, although Bishop Cosin did try to order the almshouses in his diocese to respond to the government initiative.[8] The solution in the end was the creation of the two large royal hospitals, Chelsea for disabled soldiers later in Charles' reign and the Royal Naval Hospital at Greenwich founded by William and Mary. There were no further attempts at government control of independent almshouses. They were generally too small to be a useful part of a national programme; they were not necessarily located in the places of greatest need; and they had too much legal autonomy for the authorities easily to appropriate their resources.

At a local rather than a national level, however, almshouses were often included in the range of available welfare provision, particularly if their administration and the allocation of places were effectively under the control of those same local officials who exercised responsibility for poor relief. Many community-spirited small benefactors made a contribution in their local area, in line with a long tradition of practical philanthropy stretching back to medieval times, by leaving their own house or other property to the parish to be used as almshouses for the poor, Where there were independent trustees, such as at Leamington Hastings, and at Oken's and Eyffler's in Warwick, these trustees might be the very same people who served as the parish officers, and their decisions might well be influenced by their dual responsibilities for poor relief, as shown in chapter 6. The distribution of almshouses, however, was generally too random for them to have a major

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[8] The exceptions were, of course, the various cathedral almsmen who were royal appointees. According to Bishop Cosin's instruction to John Machin, Master of Sherburn Hospital, the King and Council on 7 August 1666 ordered any vacancies in 'the Alms Mens Places in all the Hospitals within this Kingdom' should be reserved for soldiers and sailors disabled in the service of the King. Allan, *Collectanea Dunelmensis,* p. 251. At the time of Charles' order, Christ's Hospital, Buckingham, was found to be occupied by seven ancient women, rather than the thirty-six maimed soldiers for whom it was intended. Willis, *Buckingham*, p. 86 fn. 414.

practical impact on meeting the needs of the poor nationally; most villages and many towns would not have had access to an almshouse.[9] Their impact, nonetheless, was greater than their numbers might suggest, with the ideal of the almshouse as an appropriate means of caring for the poor continuing to be influential in shaping the expectations and sense of entitlement to accommodation of both the poor and those in authority.[10]

The evidence set out in chapters 4 and 5 on almshouse occupants, on the benefits they received and on their experience of almshouse life, challenges the accepted stereotype of almshouses as exclusive places for the respectable elderly poor. The in-depth exploration in chapter 6 of a single institution, through the example of the Humphrey Davis almshouse in Leamington Hastings, gives a rare opportunity to see how a seventeenth-century almshouse operated in practice, in particular the pragmatic way the local trustees used the almshouse resources in tandem with parish poor rates and other charitable funds to meet the needs of the parish. This endowed almshouse was used to house a range of people who would not appear to fit the usual model of the deserving poor, including, as it did at the end of the seventeenth century, an unmarried mother who had been sent to the house of correction for bastardy, a woman convicted and whipped for theft, and a schoolmaster who had apparently once been in prison for debt.[11] It is commonplace to talk of a distinction in the early modern period between the deserving and the undeserving poor, but these examples suggest that our idea of *deservingness* needs revising. In effect, anyone who received

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[9] 'They were popular and numerous, but not numerous enough'. B. Kirkman Gray, *A History of English Philanthropy from the dissolution of the monasteries to the taking of the first census* (London, 1905), p. 15.
[10] See, for instance, the discussion about the virtues of cottages and the labouring poor in Sarah Lloyd, 'Cottage conversations'.
[11] Jane Man, Margery Guilliams and Henry Bliss (see chapter 6).

alms or a benefit of some kind had been categorised as deserving by the very act of donation, and this did not necessarily imply a moral judgement. It may be more helpful to think in terms of categories of belonging, which led to acceptance of a person's need regardless of their moral worth. Poor people accepted into an almshouse, or those provided with parish relief, even if reluctantly, had all been approved in some way. They were neither vagrants nor outcasts (both categories which were, in this respect, genuinely undeserving). Recipients of poor relief had shown they were entitled to settlement and therefore support in the parish; almshouse occupants had met the founder's criteria for admission, or were part of a network of obligation which ensured their admission through patronage. Respectability and impeccable behaviour were not essential for this entitlement. The frequent patents or certificates declaring that a person seeking admission to an almshouse place was of 'good life and conversation' were often no more than formulaic. They were not necessarily any more truthful than statements such as that the applicant was 'desirous to spend the rest of his tyme in the service of God'.[12] What was important was that the applicant had sufficient credit, for whatever reason, to persuade someone to certify this on their behalf.

There were surprising similarities, particularly in the less wealthy almshouses, between almshouse residents and the recipients of parish relief. One of the key findings of this study is that in a large number of almshouses the stipend was either non-existent or insufficient to provide the almsperson

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[12] For instance the patents of admission for the Lord Leycester Hospital, Warwick, for Francis Whetstone (1625), John Terry (1632), Edward Moore (1638), William Barrett and John Woodgate (1643), Leonard Harrison (1646), John Myles (1647), John Duglas (1658), Robert Sydney (1663), William Colson (1673), Richard Welch (1696), Matthew Crew (1705), Richard Bolton (1708); WRO CR1600/19/2, 3, 6, 8, 11, 15, 17, 33, 36, 46, 68; WRO CR1600/20/41, 59.

with a basic subsistence; in many places where there was one, the stipend was merely a contribution to a poor person's living costs, in the same way that poor relief usually was. This suggests that many almspeople had to 'make shift' in the same way that other poor people in the community did, employing a multiplicity of strategies in order to survive. There were, however, some crucial differences between people on poor relief and the occupants of almshouses; for instance, almspeople were more likely than parish paupers to be able to attract additional forms of support. One of the most important of these differences was the security of the almsperson's position. Any benefits they received, including their accommodation, were more or less guaranteed, unlike the recipients of poor relief, who were always subject to the sometimes arbitrary decisions of individual overseers.

There has been considerable interest in the rules which existed in some almshouses, but their importance has probably been overemphasised.[13] Where they existed, these laid down the expected behaviour of almspeople, such as requiring church attendance or prohibiting drunkenness. There was usually a scale of fines or penalties, with expulsion for persistent breaches. In practice, there is little evidence of the rules being rigorously applied, and expulsions seem to have been rare. A place in an almshouse was usually granted for life, and the rules can be viewed principally as a form of contract, rather than a set of onerous restrictions on the almsperson's behaviour. This contract not only protected the gift of a place and the resources of the almshouse from abuse, but it also functioned as a protection of the rights of the occupant against arbitrary punishment and loss of their place. Indeed, some almshouse residents appear to have been

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[13] For example, Colin Richmond, 'Victorian values'.

very well aware of their rights. Samuel Jemmat, Master of the Lord Leycester Hospital in 1700, complained that when he tried to fine the brethren for offences such as answering him back and not attending church, they threatened him by calling for a visitation (the official Visitors were the Bishop, Dean and Archdeacon of Worcester).[14] Poor people on relief and in parish housing almost invariably enjoyed less protection than this. They might appeal to the magistrates, as did Jude Atkins when he tried to prevent the overseers of Baginton, Warwickshire, from placing another family in his cottage, but there was no guarantee of success. In this instance, the parish argued that Atkins and his family were in their cottage 'upon charity', and he lost his appeal. He was ordered to accept William Brookes and his family into his cottage and not 'make any disturbance'.[15]

In most almshouses, occupants seem to have been entitled to private space. Usually this consisted of one or two rooms or even a small house of their own, with their own fireplace and often their own front door. While little direct evidence survives to compare this with the standard of accommodation in ordinary poor people's housing at the time, appeals to quarter sessions by parish paupers suggest that poor people aspired to the same attributes in publicly provided housing as were available in most almshouses. The support they often received from magistrates, who were themselves part of a propertied class involved in founding or running almshouses, suggests that those in authority often agreed their aspirations were reasonable. Private space and separate doors and hearths were important both practically and symbolically. They enabled the occupants to live independently, despite their

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[14] WRO CR1741/57 Philip Styles' Notebook, p. 13.
[15] WQS Vol . VIII, Michaelmas 1687, p. 223.

economic dependence, and to adopt the appearance if not the reality of autonomous householders.[16] In one of the many paradoxes presented by the evidence, residents in the minority of higher status almshouses appear to have enjoyed less autonomy and independence than the majority of almshouse residents. Occupants living in one of the grander almshouses protected by a gatehouse might have had less direct access to the outside world than those in humbler accommodation. In higher status almshouses with communal facilities, the residents may have been expected to eat together, and spend time with other residents rather than on their own. They were more likely to have been expected to conform to intrusive rules, for example restricting the amount of time they could be absent from the almshouse; and they may have been subject to on-site supervision and surveillance from a master or warden. In other words, the economic benefits of a place in a wealthier establishment came at a price. The position of these residents was not analogous to that of independent householders, but to that of fairly lowly members of an elite household, where, within a clearly hierarchical establishment, their personal independence was sacrificed in return for the status and material benefits that came with the livery.

The position of women in almshouses is especially interesting, even ambiguous; they were clearly seen as problematic in many establishments, yet women were likely to have benefited most from an almshouse place. Economic discrimination against women was commonplace in early modern England. Women's wages were usually lower than men's, and women often

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[16] Rexroth suggests that the importance of the hearth was that it allowed a person to 'keep house'. Rexroth, *Deviance and Power*, p. 254.

received less in poor relief than male paupers.[17] In some almshouses women had to share their accommodation, whereas men rarely did, and some almswomen were expected to take care of other residents. It is nonetheless striking that almshouse stipends rarely discriminated against women, and the material benefits almswomen received were a significant improvement on the circumstances of most poor women. In particular, becoming the occupant of an almshouse may have afforded some poor women an opportunity which they would otherwise have been unable to achieve, that of increased independence and autonomy in old age.[18] Despite the anxiety about the inclusion of women in some establishments, women residents came to predominate in many almshouses where they were eligible for admission, unless their numbers were specifically restricted. This may have been partly a consequence of the apparent shift towards an older population in almshouses over the period of the study. Elderly women outlived men, then as now, and their needs may have been greater than men's if they had fewer alternative means of support available to them.

This predominance may also, however, have been a reflection of a gradual shift in accepted ideas about who were the most appropriate recipients of an almshouse place. The evidence suggests that, by the early eighteenth century, almshouses were beginning to conform to a more restricted model, as trustees of existing almshouses and founders of new ones admitted a less diverse population of resident poor. Travellers, families,

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[17] Slack (ed.), 'Salisbury', pp. 75-82. As a further example, at the Dissolution former nuns received far less compensation than monks and chantry priests, Hodgett (ed.), 'State of the Ex-religious', p. xvii.

[18] Similar, perhaps, to the increased independence experienced by older women of the middling sort in early modern Southampton, as described by Froide. Amy M. Froide, 'Old maids: the lifecycle of single women in early modern England', in Lynn Botelho & Pat Thane (eds), *Women and Ageing in British Society Since 1500* (Harlow, 2001), pp. 89-110.

and those on parish poor relief were less likely to be included, and specific age requirements became more common in admissions criteria. Elderly widows may increasingly have been seen as a safe choice, people whose circumstances meant that they were in need through no fault of their own. Slack's description of an increasing 'fastidiousness' in who was considered suitable for an almshouse place seems apt, although he was applying it mainly to the earlier exclusion of people such as lepers and lunatics.[19] Slack suggests, moreover, that it was the parallel development of parish poor relief through the seventeenth century that allowed almshouses to become more exclusive: 'A publicly funded system of relief was the foundation … which permitted [Englishmen] to indulge their benevolence in ways which did not need to embrace the disadvantaged and the dispossessed'.[20] By the early eighteenth century pressure of numbers, rising poor rates and hardening attitudes towards the poor meant that public provision for the poor increasingly adopted different characteristics from almshouses.

This is shown most clearly in the development of residential parish workhouses after the 1723 legislation, where the buildings exhibit none of the domestic touches associated with almshouses. For instance, the Chatham workhouse in Kent, built in 1725 and shown in Figure 7.2, was a large, four-storeyed building with wings at either end, rows of windows but only one door, and two chimney stacks, one at either end of the building. The ground floor plan (Figure 7.3) shows the only fireplaces to have been in the side wings, one of which was the master's accommodation and the other the

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[19] Slack, *Reformation,* p. 25.
[20] Ibid., p. 164.

kitchen and dining room. The central working area, fifty-nine feet in length, was undivided and unheated.
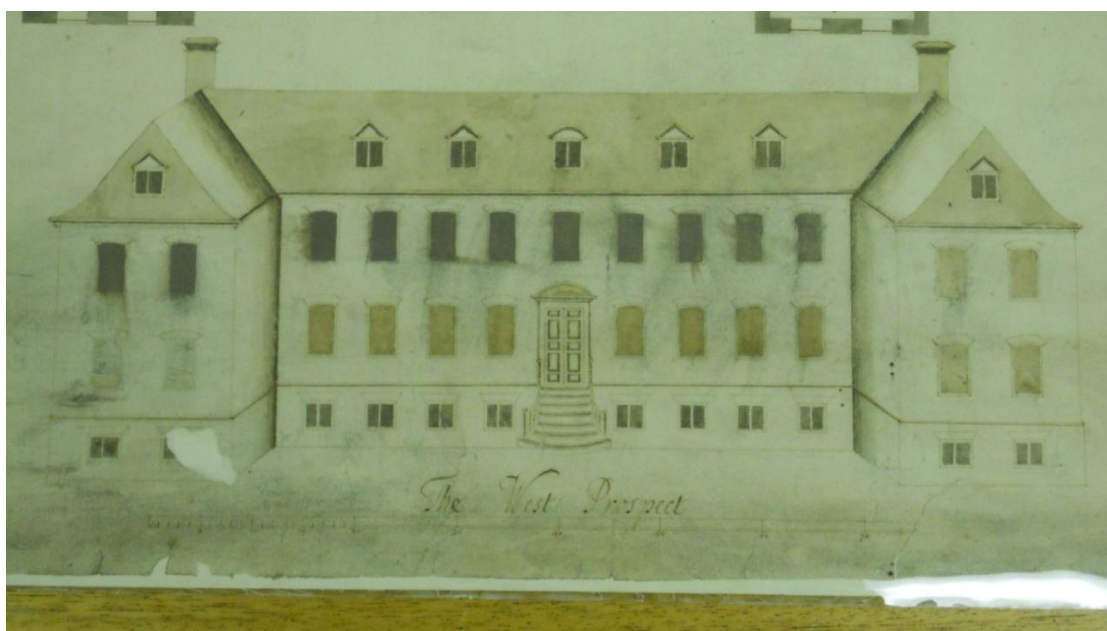
Figure 7.2 Plan and Elevation of Workhouse at Chatham c. 1725. Best Family Archive, MALSC U480/P17. By permission of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.
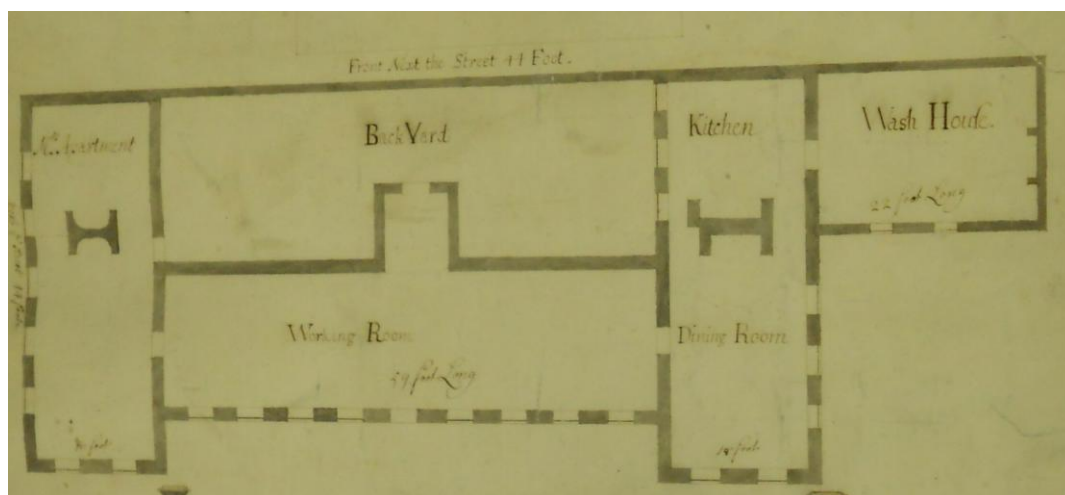
Figure 7.3 Chatham workhouse, ground floor plan. Best Family Archive, MALSC U480/P17 By permission of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.

There are no surviving plans to show the upper floors, so it is impossible to be sure how the accommodation was arranged, but from the lay-out of the

ground floor it seems likely that the workhouse residents lived in large unheated dormitories with no private space.[21]

This is in marked contrast to the image of Sir John Banks's almshouses at Maidstone (shown in Figure 7.4), which were built around 1700 in a similar architectural style for six poor people. Here there is no main entrance, nor any communal areas. Instead, each of the six almshouses has its own front door and double chimney stack, indicating at least two heated rooms for each occupant. This would have afforded the fortunate residents considerable independence and comfort.

Figure 7.4 Sir John Banks's Almshouses, Maidstone (photo: AN)

Reading history backwards from a time when almshouses were juxtaposed with workhouses, it is easy to see that they were distinct institutions, intended for very different categories of poor people. The evidence of this

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[21] In the first six years after it was built in 1725, there were on average 73 people accommodated in the new workhouse. S.P.C.K., *An Account of Several Workhouses*, 1732 edition. http://www.workhouses.org.uk/Medway/ (accessed 17 January 2014).

study shows that this had not always been the case. One of the most significant findings of this project has been the degree of variation in early modern almshouses, particularly in the earlier part of the period under examination. This inevitably raises the question of whether this is an artificial creation, the result of including such a broad range of disparate institutions within the definition of an almshouse as to render it meaningless. It is clear that the definitions applied in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were much looser than our modern understanding of an almshouse as a charitable foundation with a permanent endowment and independent existence, providing accommodation primarily for old people. It is interesting to note that the concept of an almshouse which was exported to the American colonies in the seventeenth century appears to have conformed to an earlier, broader, definition, for the characteristic institution known as an almshouse in North America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries provided accommodation for orphans, the old, the sick and the deranged. It was based, moreover, around a regime of compulsory work, and was usually supported from public funds.[22] In view of this it would have been unduly restrictive, even anachronistic, to limit an examination of early modern English almshouses only to those establishments which fitted a modern perspective. If the purpose of the project, in addition, was to consider the extent and nature of almshouse provision in early modern England, and the contribution made by almshouses within the total range of resources for poor relief, then it seems

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[22] Paul R. Huey, 'The Almshouse in Dutch and English Colonial North America and its Precedent in the Old World: Historical and Archaeological Evidence', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology,* vol. 5, no. 2 (2001), p. 144; Alice Tobriner, 'Almshouses in Sixteenth-Century England: Housing for the Poor Elderly', *Journal of Religion & Aging,* vol. 1, no. 4 (Summer 1985), p. 37.

by definition appropriate to have included even the poorest and most obscure examples.[23]

The early diversity in almshouse provision has been obscured subsequently by the separate trajectories of almshouses and statutory poor relief, created by the introduction of workhouses and the gradual separation in the concepts of voluntary charity and statutory responsibility. Seventeenth-century justices of the peace advising parish officers, and commissioners for charitable uses investigating abuses, increasingly argued that charitable bequests should not be used to reduce the poor rates. Once applied, this had the contrary effect that gifts left to meet the needs of 'the poor' could no longer be used for the benefit of those poor people whose support had become the responsibility of a statutory authority.[24] In this way, parish paupers became increasingly excluded from those groups which benefited from charitable funds, which in turn became the preserve of the less poor. This can be seen, for instance, in the decision made by the trustees of the Leamington Hastings Poors Plot Charity in 1717 to restrict payments to those parishioners who 'do not receive Collection'. It would be logical to assume that many almshouses also became subject to the same restrictive attitudes, and there are suggestions of this in the evidence discussed in chapters 4 and 6.[25] These changes, like the withdrawal of out-relief and its replacement by workhouses, may have progressed slowly or hardly at all in some places, as argued by Broad in relation to parish housing, but the final separation of

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[23] See also Cullum, 'Pore People'.

[24] The same law of charitable uses controversially excludes state school pupils today from the benefits of many ancient educational charities.

[25] WRO DR43a/194 Poors Plot Charity, Leamington Hastings, October 1717.

charitable funds and statutory responsibilities was legally enforced in the early nineteenth century through municipal reform.[26]

8. HOLTE ALMSHOUSES, ASTON LANE, ASTON, c.1926   BIRMINGHAM PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Figure 7.5 Holte almshouses, Aston, before demolition in 1931, (compare with the earlier idealised image of the same almshouses in figure 7.1). .
One of a series of postcards of Birmingham life issued by Birmingham Central Library

However great the degree of variation in early modern almshouses and however distorted the modern perceptions of comfortable almshouse life, the concept of the almshouse that survived in England was nevertheless that of an institution of benevolence. This had deep roots in medieval England, where the recurring demand for the 'hundred hospitals' represented a rallying cry for reform and concern for the plight of the poor. Almshouses may have failed to address the national problems of poverty and vagrancy, and they may have been overtaken by workhouses as the standard means by which the poor came to be accommodated. Yet, at the local level, they

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[26] Broad, 'Housing'. The Municipal Reform Act of 1835 removed charitable funds from town corporations which, like Faversham and Warwick, had used them, together with the proceeds of local taxation, in an undifferentiated fashion to meet the needs of their local population. Towns were required instead to set up separate and wholly independent municipal charities to administer any charitable funds previously under their control.

could still provide a model of tangible philanthropy and, through their portrayal of homely independence, an idealised articulation of how the poor should live. The reality of a local almshouse, such as Humphrey Davis's at Leamington Hastings, may not have matched the grandeur and comfort of more famous institutions, nor even the imagined respectability of popular perception, but it was a more typical representation of the early modern almshouse than that usually portrayed. Occupied by the poor of the parish and managed by local trustees, its continued contribution to housing the poor over four centuries remains a tribute to the efforts of men such as Humphrey Davis, Thomas Trevor, Matthew Over and their neighbours.

APPENDIX 1.1 DURHAM ALMSHOUSES c. 1550 - 1725

Almshouse name	Location	Founded	Founder	Type of founder	Inmates	Type of inmates	Accommodation	Endowed	Stipend	Administered	Master	Building	Notes
Christ's or Sherburn Hospital	Sherburn	1171	Bishop Pudsey	Bishop	15 + 15 in & out	men	'huts'?	√	A	Master	√	Rebuilt 18thC. & 19th C.	Originally Christ's Hospital for 65 lepers. Reconstituted 1585
St Johns Hospital	Barnard Castle	1229	John Baliol	Nobility	3	poor women	one room shared by 3	√	A	Master or custos	√	Demolished	Master non-resident. CC - Only 2 women now as insufficient income.
Hospital of God	Greatham	1272	Bishop Stichell	Bishop	13	Unmarried men	not known	√	A	Master	√	Rebuilt 1803/enlarged 1868	Refounded by James I in 1610. Bishop Cosins Master in 1624
Maison Dieu	Durham City	1474	Ralph Squire		N/K	Travellers or pilgrims	not known	N/K	N/K			?	Transferred to the town as poor house in 1610
Hospital of St Edmund King & Martyr or King James Hospital	Gateshead	pre-1500	Bishop of Durham	Bishop	3	poor men	one room shared by 3?	√	B	Master	√ (rector)	Rebuilt	Refounded by James I. Master to be Rector of Gateshead.
Kepier Free Grammar School and Almshouse	Houghton le Spring	1574	Rev Bernard Gilpin & John Heath	clergyman & local landowner	3	poor	none	√	_	Two governors	√ (School)	No accommodation	Gilpin the 'Apostle of the North'.
Forsters Almshouses	Darlington	1632	Francis Forster		6	poor or aged men/women	six sharing two tenements	X	NIL	N/K	X	Demolished & replaced 1856	No endowment. CC - 2 widows occupying, both receiving parish relief.
Bellasis Almshouses	Darlington	1636	James Bellasis		3	poor widows	not known	X	NIL	Parish & churchwardens	N/K	Demolished with Forsters	3 cottages, originally intended as a manufactory for wool and linen
Morgan's Charity	Fosterley, Stanhope	1641	Thomas Morgan	clergyman	3	poor women	2 rooms shared by 3 women	√	B	landowner	X	?	Rent charge on property.
Almshouses	Bishop Auckland	1662	Bishop Cosin	Bishop	4	2 men, 2 women	not known	√	A	Trustees	X	Rebuilt 1845	Now four 2 -storey houses (originally single rooms as at Durham?)
Davenport & Lilburne Almshouses	Houghton le Spring	1666	a) Rev. George Davenport & b) George Lilburne	a) Clergyman and b) Sunderland merchant & MP	6	poor men & women	single rooms	√	B	Kepier School	X	√	2 wings, each endowed separately by Lilburne & Davenport. Davenport was Cosin's chaplain
Bishop Cosin's Almshouses	Durham City	1666	Bishop Cosin	Bishop	8	4 men & 4 women over 55/60, 6 from Durham, 2 from Brancepeth	single rooms	√	A	Trustees	X	√	Original now tea rooms. Almshouse moved to Queen Street 1837
Hutchinsons	Romaldkirk	1674	William Hutchinson		6	men or women over 60	not known	√	B	Parish clerk	X	Rebuilt 1829	Previously in North Yorkshire
Almshouses	Stockton	1682	James Cook and others		N/K	N/K	not known	N/K	N/K		N/K	Sold in 1873	
John Duck's Hospital	Great Lumley, Chester le Street	1686	Sir John Duck	Butcher & Mayor of Durham	12	Widows	single rooms	√	A	landowner	X	Demolished 1971	Also known as Lumley Hospital. No trustees ever appointed
Coopers Almshouse	Sedgefield	1702	Thomas Cooper		10	5 men & 5 women over 50	single rooms	√	A		X	Demolished 1961	Further endowed in C19th, as people left to go into the workhouse
Bowes Almshouse	Bishopwearmouth	1712	Rev. John Bowes	clergyman	12	poor women	shared rooms?	√	N/K	Rector	N/K	?	Endowed by will of Dr Thomas Ogle 1725. Photo shows single storey row of 6 one roomed cottages
Mowbray & Gibsons	Bishopwearmouth	1727	Jane Gibson		12	poor persons	single rooms	√	√ N/K	Mowbray family	N/K	Rebuilt 1860s	merged
Freemen & Stallingers	Sunderland	?			8	widows	single rooms?	X	NIL	Freemen	N/K	?	2 almshouses with 8 apartments. CC - run by corporate body of freemen, place widows on parish rates.
Not used as intended:	(not included in the figures)												
Bowman's Charity	*Gateshead*	*1689*	*John Bowman*		*6*	*parish poor*	*shared house*	*X*	*NIL*	*Parish & churchwardens*		*old house*	*House left to c/w for rents to be distributed to poor. Used by o/s to house paupers*
Elizabeth Tewart's Charity	*Chester le Street*	*c. 1700*	*Elizabeth Tewart*		*2*	*Poor widows*						*2 houses*	*Never used as intended.*

Almshouse name	Location	Founded	Founder	Type of founder	Inmates	Type of inmates	Accommodation	Endowed	Stipend	Administered	Master	Building	Notes
Holy Cross Hospital	Stratford-upon-Avon	1269	Guild of the Holy Cross	Guild	24	Guild members/ town poor	Not known		B	Guild then town corporation	X	√ Rebuilt 1427 and C16th?	Only 12 hearths in Hearth Tax 1670, so shared rooms?
Bond's Hospital	Coventry	1507	Thomas Bond	Local mercer	11	Poor men over 40 of Trinity or Corpus Christi Guilds & one woman	Cubicles, then rooms?	√	B then A	City corporation	X	√	Located next to later Bablake Boys' Hospital, and House of Correction
Chapmans Almshouse	Coleshill	1507	Richard Chapman	weaver	?	couple to live there and look after the poor	Not known		N/K	Trustees	N/K	?	
Ford's Hospital or Greyfriars	Coventry	1509	William Forde	Local mercer	6	Five men and one woman, later 5 couples and one woman, about 60	2 rooms each	√	B then A	City corporation	X	√	Extended 19th century, restored after Second World War damage
Coughton Almshouses	Coughton	1518	Sir Robert Throckmorton	Gentry	5	Tenants/servants	Not known	√	A	Family	X	Rebuilt C19th for 6?	Now private housing - Cross Cottages, Birmingham Road?
Saltisford Almshouses	Warwick	pre-1550?	Associated with St Michael's Hospital?		? 4+	?	?shared houses?		N/K	St Mary's parish?	X	Demolished	Granted to owner of Priory. Maintained by Sir Thomas Puckering
Westgate Almshouses	Warwick	pre -1570	possibly guild	Guild?	8	poor women	shared houses		N/K	Town corporation	X	Rebuilt 19th century	
Lawrence Sherriff Almshouses	Rugby	1567	Lawrence Sherriff	London grocer	4	poor men	Two rooms each	√	A	Trustees	√ (School)	Rebuilt C18th & C20th	Originally in Sherriff's house with school
Lord Leycester Hospital	Warwick	1571	Robert Dudey	Nobility. Member of the Council	12	Retired soldiers	cubicles	√	A	Master	√	√ but not accomm	Originally in converted Guildhall, now in neighbouring houses
Okens Almshouses	Warwick	1571	Thomas Oken	Local mercer	6	poor people or couples	shared houses, later shared rooms	√	B	Trustees	X	Burnt in Great Fire	Originals burnt in Great Fire. Replaced 1696 by 6 rooms next to Eyffler's, shared by 12 women
Old Almshouses	Stoneleigh	1574	Sir Thomas & Dame Alice Leigh	London mercer & Lord Mayor	10	Estate tenants?	2 rooms each	√	A	Churchwardens	X	√	Originally half-timbered, faced in stone late C16th
Almshouses	Nuneaton	pre 1587	not known	not known	? 4+	?	Not known		N/K		N/K	Demolished	Originally in churchyard. Demolished by grammar school 1862?
Eyffler's Almshouses	Warwick	1591	Nichols Eyffler	Westphalian glazier	8	older women	2 rooms shared	√	B	Okens trustees	X	√	Converted barn
Travellers' Rest	Coleshill	1591	George Butler	one of Chapman's trustees	?	travellers	Not known	√	N/K	Trustees		?	Left his 'almshouse' for poor travellers - was this Chapman's?

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Almshouse name	Location	Founded	Founder	Type of founder	Inmates	Type of inmates	Accommodation	Endowed	Stipend	Administration	Master	Building	Notes
Puckerings Almshouses	Warwick	1633	Sir Thomas Puckering	MP & High Sheriff	6	poor tradesmen who took apprentices	house each		_		X	Demolished 1960s	Puckering's father was Lord keeper of the Seal. Puckering was companion to Prince Henry.
West Orchard Almshouses	Coventry	1638	John Clark	alderman	? 2+	poor people	shared houses	X	N/K	Alderman & vicar	X	?	Former guild property
Widows Charity Homes	Kenilworth	1644	George Denton	N/K	3	widows	Not known	X	N/K	not known - ?parish		Rebuilt 19th century	Are these the almshouses in the Hearth Tax 1670?
Holte Almshouses	Aston	1655	Sir Thomas Holte	Gentry	10	5 poor men & 5 poor women, all single, old +	one room each	√	A	Family	X	Demolished 1931	
Priory Almshouses	Alcester	1659	John Bridges	Steward to Lord Brooke	4	poor	2 rooms each	X	NIL	not known - ?parish	X	Demolished 1960s	
Digbeth Almshouses	Birmingham	pre 1668	Lench's charity	Founder of charity in 1525 was a tanner	?	N/K	Not known	√	N/K	Trustees		Replaced 1764	Charity originated 1525. Further endowments and almshouses added to the trust
Temple Balsall Hospital	Temple Balsall	1671	Lady Katherine Leveson	Aristocracy - Leicester's granddaughter	20	women	2 rooms shared?	√	A	Trustees	√	Rebuilt C18th and C19th	
Coleshill Almshouses	Coleshill	1679	William Harvey	N/K	2	poor widows	shared house	√	N/K			?	left a house for poor widows to live in
Bleachfield Almshouses	Alcester	1680	George Ingram	Brother in law to John Bridges?	4	poor over 50	2 rooms each	X	NIL	not known - ?parish	X	Demolished 1960s	
Dunchurch Almshouses	Dunchurch	1690	Thomas Newcomb	Royal printer	6	poor men & women	Not known	√	N/K	Minister & churchwardens	X	Rebuilt 1817	
Almshouses	Shustoke	1699	Thomas Huntbach	landowner	6	poor widows or others	2 rooms each	√	B	owner of land	X	√	
Elborough's Almshouses	Rugby	pre 1707	Richard Elborough	clergyman?	6	widows over 60	2 rooms each	√	N/K	Trustees	√ (School)	?	
Yardley's Almshouses	Warwick	pre 1712	John Yardley	N/K	4	poor women	Not known	X	NIL	parish	X	Demolished	
Almshouses	Coleshill	1712	Thomas Everett	clergyman	? 2+	use of poor, old +	?shared houses?		NIL	vicar	X	?	left 2 tenements for the use of the poor
Chamberlaine's Almshouses	Bedworth	1715	Nicholas Chamberlaine	clergyman	18	Poor women or men	2 rooms shared (12) 2 rooms each (6)	√	A	Trustees	√ (School)	Rebuilt C19th	Founder was Rector of Bedworth for 50 years. Also built two schools
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Almshouse name	Location	Founded	Founder	Type of founder	Inmates	Type of inmates	Accommodation	Endowed	Stipend	Administered	Master	Building	Notes
Gramer's Almshouses	Mancetter	1724	James Gramer	London goldsmith	6	poor men over 60	one room each	√	√	Trustees	X	√	Single storey row. Similar row built nearby C19th
Not included in the figures:													
?	Henley -in-Arden	pre 1670			? 4+							?	'Foure almes houses' in 1670 Hearth Tax
Guy's Almshouses	Tamworth	1678	Thomas Guy	London bookseller	14	Initially 6, then 14 poor men and women	one room each (and a library)	√		Initially Stationer's Co., then trustees		Enlarged 1693, rebuilt 1912	Only part of Tamworth in Warwickshire, mostly in Staffordshire. Townspeople of Tamworth excluded from the almshouse
Rosemary Lane Almshouses	Warwick	1695	Town corporation	Town corporation	28	parish poor	Not known	X	_	Town corporation	X	Demolished C18th	Two converted barns built after the Great Fire. Run as town poor houses?
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APPENDIX 1.3 KENT ALMSHOUSES c. 1550 - 1725

Almshouse name	Location	Founded	Founder	Type of founder	Inmates	Type of Inmates	Accommodation	Endowed	Stipend	Administered	Master	Building	Notes
St John the Baptist Hospital	Canterbury	1070	Lanfranc	Archbishop	100, then 38-40	aged & other men & women, 40 in & 20 out	N/K	√	√	Jointly with St Nicholas	√	Mostly rebuilt 19thC	Given new ordinances by Archbishop Parker in 1560
St Bartholomews Hospital	Chatham	1077	Gundulf	Bishop of Rochester	2 then 4	originally lepers, now none	None	√	√	Dean of Rochester	X	None	Subject to abuse by Dean. Pensions given to colleagues, not poor men.
St Nicholas Harbledown	Harbledown, Canterbury	1084	Lanfranc	Archbishop	100, then 30, then 12	originally lepers, then poor men & women - 30 in & 30 out	N/K	√	√	Jointly with St Johns.	√	Rebuilt 19thC.	1674 Archbishop Sheldon led subscription for 12 replacement houses and hall.
Eastbridge Hospital, or Hospital of St Thomas the Martyr	Canterbury	1180	Edward Fitz Osbold	merchant	12. Later 10	poor pilgrims and sick, then 5 poor men & 5 poor women over 50	single rooms?	√	B	Mayor decided admissions	√	√	Refounded by Archbishop Parker for 12 in 1569, and again in 1584 by Archbishop Whitgift for 10. Undercroft originally dormitory.
St Bartholomews Hospital	Sandwich	1227	Sir Henry de Sandwich	Warden of the Cinque Ports	16	originally for better-off poor? 1710 - older	probably 2 room cottages	√	√	Town mayor	√ (an almsman)	?	Probate inventories of 16thC. show some inmates had more than 2 rooms. Evidence that they were not particularly poor.
St Johns Hospital or Hospital of God	Sandwich	1287	unknown		12	poor men & women, and travellers	single rooms. Separate accomm for travellers	√	B	Town mayor	√	Rebuilt 1805, sold 1969.	Reduced to 6 inmates because of poverty in 1737.
St Catherine's Hospital	Rochester	1315	Symon Pontyn	MP for Rochester	12	poor or lepers	Since 1717 single rooms	√	B	Mayor & Vicar	N/K	Rebuilt 1717	Chancery commission in 1704 because of abuses (Hasted).
Maynard & Cotton's Spital	Canterbury	1317 & 1604	John Maynard & Leonard Cotton	Maynard a rich citizen; Cotton a pewterer, alderman & mayor	7 + 3	men & women	single rooms	√	B	Mayor	√	Rebuilt 1707	Ancient foundation further endowed in 1604 by Leonard Cotton
Hospital of St Bartholomew (formerly of St Andrew)	Hythe	refounded 1336	Hamo	Bishop of Rochester	13 (later 10)	poor men & women	N/K	√	√	Mayor etc	Prior (an almsman)	Rebuilt 1796	Moved into Hythe from Saltwood 1685 (Hasted).
Hospital of Thomas the Martyr or Ellys Hospital	Sandwich	1392	Thomas Ellys	Draper, Mayor & MP	12	Poor of the 3 town parishes - 8 men & 4 women	single rooms		N/K	Trustees	√ (an almsman)	Rebuilt 1864	Rules of hospital drawn up 1725 after mismanagement & intervention of John Michell, MP for Sandwich.
Sevenoaks Almshouses	Sevenoaks	1418 or 1432	William Sennocke or Sevenoke	Grocer, Lord Mayor of London	20	men & women	'mansion houses'	√	√	Trustees	√ (and school)	Rebuilt 1724	
Trinity House Almshouses	Deptford	1514	Trinity House	fraternity	N/K	shipmasters & widows	various		N/K	Fraternity		Rebuilt 1788	Several almshouses, known collectively as Trinity Hospital (Jordan)
Spittle House, or Key Street Hospital	Borden	before 1530	unknown		N/K	N/K	N/K		N/K	County Treasurer	√	N/K	County establishment? Master paid by County Treasurer (QS 1600 & 1601) Four inmates c.1600. Last reference 1607.

Almshouse name	Location	Founded	Founder	Type of founder	Inmates	Type of Inmates	Accommodation	Endowed	Stipend	Administered	Master	Building	Notes
Hospital of St John	Hythe	before 1549	unknown		8	poor men & women	N/K	√	B	Trustees		?	Hasted assumes this predates 1330 and was originally for lepers.
Various almshouses	Maidstone	before 1549	Guild of Corpus Christi	fraternity	? 8+	sick, infirm & poor	cottages with a ground floor room & garrett		N/K	Town corporation		?	Various almshouses came to the corporation with the guild lands. 3 in Pudding lane, 2 in Stone Street, I on the bridge, several in Week Street.
Town almshouse or Seamens Hospital	Dover	before 1552	ancient municapal foundation		N/K	town poor, distressed mariners etc	N/K		N/K	Mayor & corporation	Mayor acted as Master	closed 1872	Corporation moved town almshouse to Queen St in 1552 - larger premises required to accommodate sailors because of closure of Maison Dieu at Dissolution.
Almshouse	Faversham	before 1555	unknown		N/K	N/K	N/K		N/K	Corporation		N/K	1535 survey of Faversham manor has a hospital for poor people in the town. Wardmote minutes mention almshouse 1555, 1565 etc.
Almhouse	Eastwell	1560	Sir Thomas Moyle		N/K	N/K	N/K		B	Landowner & parish officers		N/K	Hasted refers to 'an almshouse'. CC - a cottage lived in by an old couple?
Almshouses	Woolwich	1560	Sir Martin Bowes	MP, Lord Mayor & in charge of Royal Mint	5	poor over 50	N/K		B	Goldsmiths Company		Rebuilt 1771, now demolished	Bowes also involved in establishing the London hospitals
Kempe's Almshouses	Wye	before 1562	Sir Thomas Kempe's family		6	parish poor	N/K	X	NIL	Churchwardens	X	N/K	CC - Will of Robert Searley 1567 refers to 6 poor in Kemp's almshouse.
Serles Hospital	Wye	1567	Robert Serlys		3	parish poor	N/K		N/K			Exchanged C18th for workhouse	Left his house 'Puntowes' for 3 poor. Called Serles Hospital, and building exchanged for workhouse (Hasted)
Manwood's Hospital	Hackington, Canterbury	1570	Sir Roger Manwood	Govt. lawyer	6	aged poor men & wives	2 rooms each	√	A	Mayor, aldermen, archdeacon	parish clerk as warden	√	Also founded school in Sandwich, and ?house of correction in Canterbury (will 1592).
Spital House of Our Lord Jesus Christ	Dartford	before 1572	John Byer		9	parish poor	Divided into 2 tenements 1635; later into 9	√	N/K	Churchwardens & landowner	? Governor	N/K	Probably the Dartford Spital mentioned in Sandhurst O/S a/c 1627 - used as county almshouse for lame & poor? 1704 further endowed by John Twistleton?
Lowfield Almshouses	Dartford	1572	John Byer		4	parish poor	cottage each	√	B	Churchwardens & landowner	X	N/K	
Westerham Almshouses	Westerham	1572	Edward Colthurst		6	parish poor	one room each	X	NIL	Vicar & churchwardens	X	N/K	Church inscription says Coltherst of Essex left his house called Wimbles to the parish, Used as an almshouse.
Queen Elizabeth's Hospital	East Greenwich	1576	William Lambard	Court of Chancery lawyer, antiquarian	20	(Old +) 8 - East Greenwich, 10 - Blackheath Hundred, 2 others, on parish relief.	one (large) room each	√	A	Drapers Company	warden (an alms person)	√	Royal archivist and historian of Kent. Also involved in New Cobham College & Hawkins Hospital. Friend of Archbishop Parker, his patrons were Burleigh & Cobham.
Lambe's Almshouses	Sutton Valence	1579	William Lambe	London clothworker & courtier to H VIII	6	women	one room each	√	A	Clothworkers Company	√ (and school)	Rebuilt 1888	Prescott says founded for 12, but only 6 rooms, and CC says occupied by 6 widows. Also founded school (Hasted).
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Almshouse name	Location	Founded	Founder	Type of founder	Inmates	Type of Inmates	Accommodation	Endowed	Stipend	Administered	Master	Building	Notes
Poor Travellers Rest	Rochester	1579	Richard Watts	MP for Rochester	6	poor and travellers	single rooms for 6 poor - plus lodging for travellers	√	N/K	Mayor	Provider	√	The almshouse mentioned in the city accounts??
Toke and Streeter Almshouses	Great Chard	1583	Sir Francis Toke		2	poor old & sick	cottage each	√	A	Churchwardens	X	Rebuilt C19th	Almspeople to be resident at least 2 months a year (!) 2 cottages rebuilt and 2 added 1833-4.
Beare's Almshouses	Swanscombe	1587	John Beare	gentleman	3	aged poor men or women	tenement each	X	NIL	Clergy & churchwardens	X	Exchanged c.1800	Exchanged for workhouse?
Almshouse	Shoreham	1580s	unknown		3	parish poor	one room each		N/K	Landowner		√	Charity originated 1473 but current building C16th. Single storey, 3 doors and windows. Lived in by 3 widows (Hasted).
Almshouse	Sandwich	1589	Sir Roger Manwood	Govt. lawyer	1 or 2	one or two poor folk	small shared house	X	NIL	Governors, plus Vicar & churchwardens of St Mary's	X	?	Manwood left small house to parish for poor. Also endowed school at Sandwich, and almshouse at Hackington.
Hawkins or Chatham Hospital	Chatham	1592	Sir John Hawkins	Admiral & Treasurer of the Fleet	10	sailors or shipwrights & wives over 50	individual houses	√	A	Trustees	Deputy Governor	Rebuilt 1790	Abp. Whitgift & William Lambarde early governors. Rules drawn up by Lambarde.
Wrott & Hill Almshouses	Sutton at Hone, Dartford	1596	Katherine Wrott		4	single poor	2 rooms each	√	NIL	?		Rebuilt C18th?	2 storey tenements, common hall and garden. Added to in 1720.
New Cobham College	Cobham	1598	William Brooke, Lord Cobham	Lord Lieutenant & Warden of Cinque Ports	20	poor on relief of surrounding parishes	2 rooms each	√	A	Rochester Bridge Wardens	warden (an alms person)	√	In old buildings of chantry college. William Lambarde was Cobham's executor and one of first presidents.
Jesus Hospital	Canterbury	1599	Sir John Boys	lawyer, steward to Archbishops	12	men & women over 55	one room each	√	A	Trustees, incl. mayor, Dean & archdeacon	√ (and school)	√	Built on lands of St Gregorys priory in Northgate, with chapel and school.
Trinity Hospital	Aylesford	1605	John Sedley	local landowner	7	poor men	one room each	√	A	Heirs	warden (an alms person)	Rebuilt C19th	Almshouses built by son William in 1625. Incresed to 10? (Prescott)
John Franklyn's Almshouses	East Farleigh	1609	Sir John Franklyn	gentleman, London citizen	6	parish poor	2 rooms each	X	NIL	Parish overseers	X	√ sold 1965	1637 Commission recovered the almshouses, after appropriated by the landowner.
Linton Park Almshouses	Linton	1610	Sir Anthony Mayne	local landowner	4	estate workers?	cottages	√	B	Heirs		N/K	No information, but in Hasted and CC.
Southlands Hospital	New Romney	1610	John Southland	gentleman	4	2 couples	cottage for each couple, or 2 widows sharing	√	B	Mayor	Governor & schoolmaster	Rebuilt 1714	Rebuilt as 4 cottages - formerly 2, for couples or widows sharing. Further endowment from Thomas Baker 1728.
Trinity Hospital	Greenwich	1613	Earl of Northampton	nobility	20	Poor men over 56, 12 from Greenwich, 8 from Norfolk.	one room each	√	A	Mercers Company	√	√	Furniture & food provided, meals eaten communally in hall. Also employed butler, cook, woman to attend the almsmen, laundress and barber.
Almshouse	Faversham	1614	Thomas Mendfield	Mayor	6	poor widows	N/K	√	A	Corporation		Rebuilt C19th	Present building 1863
Almshouses	Sittingbourne	before 1615	unknown		N/K	parish poor	N/K	X	N/K	Parish officers		N/K	John Allen left money to poor of almshouses in Crown Quay Lane (CC & Hasted).
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Almshouse name	Location	Founded	Founder	Type of founder	Inmates	Type of Inmates	Accommodation	Endowed	Stipend	Administered	Master	Building	Notes
Crowe's Almshouses	Brasted	1618	William Crowe	gentleman & local landowner	? 5	parish poor	N/K	X	NIL	Parish officers	X	Sold	Exchanged? Alms Row (C16th cottages) survives.
Honywood's Almshouses	Lenham	1622	Anthony Honywood		6	poor	N/K	√	A	Trustees & & churchwardens	Governor	N/K	
Almshouse	Westerham	1623	Arthur Willard		2	poor widows	shared house	X	NIL	Vicar & c/w	X	?	Willard left his house called Triborns to trustees for relief of 2 widows. In the hands of vicar & c/w, used as almshouse (CC)
St Thomas's Houses	Milton, Gravesend	1624	Henry Pinnock	Portreve of Gravesend	16	6 from Milton, 6 from Gravesend	2 rooms each	√	N/K	Parish officers	Master Weaver	Rebuilt 1834	St Thomas's Corner site of wayside chapel? Also house for master weaver to employ the almspeople.
Almshouse	Sandwich	1625	Thomas Fulnetby	gentleman	4	tradesmen or other poor	N/K	√	B	N/K	X	N/K	
Almshouse	Elham	1631	unknown		? 4	parish poor	probably 2 room cottages		NIL	Parish officers		Demolished c.1800	4 delapidated cottages (CC). Demolished, land sold and used to erect a poor house.
Almshouse	Faversham	1635	John Foade or Ford		3	poor widows	shared house	X	NIL	Corporation		Rebuilt C19th	Present building 1863
Almshouse	Godmersham	1635	Thomas Scott	gentleman	4?	parish poor	Left 2 newly built houses for poor people	X	NIL	Heirs or churchwardens	X	?	Scott left 2 houses to parish 1635 (Hasted). Hearth Tax - 4 exempt. Almshouse rebuilt on this site C18th for 8 (visited by Jane Austin in 1807).
Almshouse	Wye	1642	John & Ann Tilden		2	ancient widows	shared house	√	B	Trustees		√	Building became sexton's house CC).
Harrietsham Almshouses	Harrietsham	1646	Mark Quested	London fishmonger	12	6 from parish, 6 Fishmongers Co.	single storey, 1 or 2 rooms each?	√	A	Fishmongers Company		Rebuilt 1770	Given up by Fishmongers Company 2010.
Almshouse	Tonbridge	1648	John Brightling		6	poor aged people	2 messuages shared	√	NIL	Parish officers	X	N/K	Two old inhabitants live in the almshouses rent-free, endowment used for bread for 6 old working people (CC).
John & Ann Smith's Almshouses	Longport, Canterbury	1656	John & Ann Smith	Wealthy Londoners	8	4 poor men, 4 poor women	one room cottages each	√	A	Trustees, including vicar	X	√	Endowed almshouse in thanks for birth of son after 20 years of marriage in 1644. Building says 1657.
Cogan's Hospital	Canterbury	1658	John Cogan	Commonwealth administrator of sequestered church lands	6	clergy widows	Left his house to accommodate 6 widows and a servant	√	NIL	Trustees appointed by mayor & aldermen	X	√ Sold	Cogan descended from William Cockyn, founder of St Nicholas & St Katherine's Hospital in St Peter's Street.
Colfe's Almshouses	Lewisham	1658	Abraham Colfe	clergyman, Vicar of parish	5	poor over 60	single storey, one room each, plus attic?		A	Leathersellers Company		Demolished 1958	Founded two schools as well as the almshouse. Almshouses pictured in Godfrey pl.39b.
William Jackson Almshouses	Cowden	1665	William Jackson		? 5+	parish poor	N/K	X	NIL	Parish officers	X	N/K	Jackson's almshouse a replacement for earlier parish almshouse burnt down in 1657?
Bromley College	Bromley	1666	John Warner	Bishop of Rochester	20	widows of loyal clergy	5 rooms each	√	A	Archbishop, Bishop & Dean	Chaplain	√	Built near Bishop's palace at Bromley. 2 ground floor rooms, kitchen & 2 bedrooms each, one for a maid.
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Almshouse name	Location	Founded	Founder	Type of founder	Inmates	Type of Inmates	Accommodation	Endowed	Stipend	Administered	Master	Building	Notes
Gabriel Richards Almshouses	Goodnestone	1671	Gabriel Richards		4	aged & decayed gentlemen/ women or single men/women	one room each	√	B not fixed	Trustees	X	√	Founder's relatives preferred. His own house divided up, let to a tenant, plus 4 rooms allotted to the almspeople
Sir John Banks' Almshouses	Maidstone	1679	Sir John Banks	MP, merchant & member of East India Co.	6	men & women	3 rooms each	√	A	Trustees	X	√	Banks wealthy, baronet, but not accepted by local gentry. A Fellow of the Royal Society, friend of Pepys and Locke.
Thomas Philipots Almshouse	Eltham	1680	Thomas Philipots	Poet & writer	6	4 from Eltham, 2 from Chislehurst	3 rooms each	√	B	Trustees	X	Demolished 1929	Built 1693. Heated bedroom and living room each. Clothworkers Co. refused to accept the trust, so charity established by Chancery.
Boone's Almshouses	Lee	1683	Christopher & Mary Boone	London merchant	6	poor of Lee over 57, otherwise Lewisham, or Greenwich	shared houses	√	A	Merchant Taylors	X	Demolished 1876	Also chapel and house for schoolmistress to teach 12 poor children.
Tanners Green	Faversham	1690	Thomas Knowler	Town Mayor	2	poor widows	house each	X	NIL	Heirs		N/K	
Rawlins Almshouses	Beckenham	1694	Anthony Rawlins		3	parish poor	cottage each	X	NIL	Parish officers		N/K	3 cottages, no endowment
Royal Naval Hospital	Greenwich	1695	William & Mary	monarch	100 later 350	poor or disabled seamen	?	√	√	Trustees		√ but closed 1869	Modelled on Les Invalides and Chelsea Hospital. When complete designed to accommodate 1,500 seamen. First admissions 1705.
Morden College	Blackheath	1695	Sir John Morden	London merchant	40	single or widowed poor merchants over 50	2 rooms each		A	Trustees		√	Building designed by Wren
Drapers' Homes	Margate	1709	Michael Yoakley	mariner, merchant & Quaker	9 + 1	nine poor + overseer, old +	2 rooms each	√	√	Trustees	overseer	√	Meeting room at the almshouse, and burial ground. Yoakley supported the Quaker workhouse at Clerkenwell. Also left Hope Ct almshouses in Stepney.
Almshouses	Pembury	1716	Charles Amherst	gentleman	6	old, blind or impotent of the parish	2 rooms each	√	A	Heirs	X	√	
Harris's Almshouse	Canterbury	1719	Thomas Harris	hop merchant	5	aged 50+ and not receiving parish alms	N/K	√	NIL	N/K	X	X	Closed down (Hill) but revenues still administered by the united charities
Napleton's almshouse	Faversham	1721	Thomas Napleton	Town Mayor	6	poor old men - ?decayed tradesmen	N/K	√	A	Town corporation		N/K	
Sir Thomas Dunk's almshouses	Highgate, Hawkhurst	1723	Sir Thomas Dunk	London ironmonger?	6	3 men, 3 women	2 rooms each	√	A	Trustees & churchwardens		√	Schoolroom with almshouses either side
North's Almshouses	West Farleigh	1725	Rev Oliver North	clergyman	2	poor families	cottage each	√	√ not fixed	Vicar and churchwardens		?	
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Almshouse name	Location	Founded	Founder	Type of founder	Inmates	Type of Inmates	Accommodation	Endowed	Stipend	Administered	Master	Building	Notes
Not included in the figures:													
Alexander Dence Poore Almshouse'	*Cranbrook*	*1574*	*Alexander Dence*	*clothier*	*3 + 2*		*House for couple & 3 beds for lodging, plus 2 houses for 2 widows*	*v*	*N/K*	*Churchwardens & parish*	*X*		*Also intended a school, but neither activated. Property let, income used for poor, and later to build a workhouse.*
Malthouse Almshouses	*Sandhurst*	*1656*	*Sir John Fowle*	*gentry*	*N/K*	*parish poor*	*malthouse converted to dwellings for the poor*	*X*	*X*	*Parish officers*	*X*	*Burnt down 1695*	*Malthouse left for use of parish, converted to 4 - 6 dwellingsfor rent and to house parish poor.*
Almshouse	*Hever*	*pre-1692*			*N/K*	*N/K*			*N/K*	*Churchwardens?*			*1692 thatching of almshouse in c/w o/s a/c (CKS catalogue)*
Also almshouses mentioned in Hearth Tax at Tenterden (4), High Halden (3) and Luddenham (2)													
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Appendix 5 .1

Inflation index, based on a composite unit of foodstuffs (1451-1470 = 100)

[Reproduced from Lynn Botelho, *Old Age and the English Poor Law, 1500 – 1700,* (Woodbridge, 2004), p. 144.]

1500s	**106**
1510s	**116**
1520s	**159**
1530s	**161**
1540s	**217**
1550s	**315**
1560s	**298**
1570s	**241***
1580s	**389**
1590s	**530**
1600s	**527**
1610s	**583**
1620s	**585**
1630s	**687**
1640s	**723**
1650s	**687**
1660s	**702**
1670s	**675**
1680s	**631**
1690s	**737**

* The figure of 241 seems surprising and does not accord with the movement in prices shown in Keith Wrightson's similar table, where the respective figures for the 1560s and 1570s are 278 and 315. Assuming this is a misprint, the figure of 341 is used in Appendix 5.2.

Appendix 5.2

Minimum subsistence level adjusted for inflation

1690s = £3 17s. 0d.

Year	1550s	1560s	1570s	1580s	1590s	1600s	1610s	1620s	1630s	1640s	1650s	1660s	1670s	1680s	1690s
Inflation Index [from Botelho (2004) p. 144]	315	298	341	389	530	527	583	585	687	723	687	702	675	631	737
Almsperson minimum subsistence budget	£1.13s.0d	£1.11s.2d	£1.15s.6d	£2.0s.7d	£2.15s.4d	£2.15s.0d	£3.1s.0d	£3.1s.2d	£3.11s.8d	£3.15s.6d	£3.11s.8d	£3.13s.4d	£3.10s.6d.	£3.6s.6d	£3.17s.0d

Pre-decimal currency   - pounds, shillings and pence   (£ s. d.)

£1   (one pound sterling) = 20s.   1s. (one shilling) = 12d.

Appendix 5.3   Almshouse stipends by decade

    Below minimum subsistence level

	Almshouse	Date	Stipend	1550s	1560s	1570s	1580s	1590s	Notes
Inflation Index (1451-1470 = 100)				**315**	**298**	**341**	**389**	**530**	**(From Appendix 5.1)**
Minimum subsistence level (with inflation)				**£1 13s. 0d.**	**£1 11s. 2d.**	**£1 15s. 6d.**	**£2 0s. 7d.**	**£2 15s. 4d.**	**(From Appendix 5.2)**
K	Eastbridge, Canterbury	1180	£1 6s. 8d.				£1 6s. 8d.		
K	St John's, Hythe	1548			£0 15s.0d.				
K	Eastwell	1560	£0 19s. 6d.		£0 19s. 6d.				
K	Kemp's, Wye	Before 1562			Nil				
K	Woolwich	1566	£1 10s. 5d.		£1 10s. 5d.				
K	Manwood's, Hackington	1570	£2 12s. 0d.			£2 12s. 0d.			Plus bread, dinners, clothing
K	Westerham (1)	1572	Nil			Nil			
K	Lowfield, Dartford	1572	£1 6s. 8d.			£1 6s. 8d.			
K	East Greenwich	1578	£3 12s. 0d.			£3 12s. 0d.			Further endowed 1601
K	Lambe's, Sutton Valence	1579	£4 0s. 0d.			£4 0s. 0d.			Plus half chaldron coal
K	Great Chart	1583	£2 11s. 8d.				£2 11s. 8d.		
K	Beare's, Swanscombe	1587	Nil				Nil		
K	Manwood's, Sandwich	1589	Nil				Nil		
K	Chatham Hospital	1592	£5 4s. 0d.					£5 4s. 0d.	
K	Sutton-at-Hone	1596	Nil					Nil	
K	Cobham College	1597	£4 0s. 0d.					£4 0s. 0d.	

	Almshouse	Date	Stipend	1550s	1560s	1570s	1580s	1590s	Notes
K	Jesus Hospital, Canterbury	1599	£4 0s. 0d.					£4 0s. 0d.	
B	Stoke Poges	1573	£3 6s. 8d.			£3 6s. 8d.			4 loads of firewood each, & gown every 2nd year
B	Buckingham (1)	1574	£0 17s. 4d.			£0 17s. 4d.			
B	Dormers, Wing	1596	£4 0s. 0d.					£4 0s. 0d.	
N	St Giles, Norwich	1249	Full board	Full board					
N	Crome's, Norwich	1518	Nil						
N	East Bradenham	1547	Nil	Nil					Rent free accommodation only
N	Thetford	1567	£2 12s. 0d.		£2 12s. 0d.				Plus 10s. for gown every year
N	Costessey	1573	£2 15s. 4d		.	£2 15s. 4d.			Including 3s.4d. fuel, plus gown
N	North Creake	1592	£4 3s. 0d.					£4 3s. 0d.	For support & clothing
N	Brancaster	1596	£1 5s. 0d.					£1 5s. 0d.	
N	Oxnead	1598	£2 12s. 0d.					£2 12s. 0d.	Plus fuel & gown, & Sunday dinner & supper
Y	Holbeck	1481	£0 6s. 6d.						
Y	Whitkirk	1520	£1 10s. 5d.						
Y	Ryther	1528	Full board	Full board					
Y	Hull	1548	£2 12s. 0d.						
Y	Kirkby Ravensworth	1556	£1 10s. 4d.	£1 10s. 4d.					
Y	Hemsworth	1556	£4 0s. 0d.	£4 0s. 0d.					
Y	Warmfield	1558	£3 0s. 0d.	£3 0s. 0d.					
Y	Guisborough	1561	£2 12s. 0d.		£2 12s. 0d.				Plus £2 for all 12 for gowns
Y	Doncaster (1)	1562	£1 6s. 0d.		£1 6s. 0d.				Plus garden plot & a load of fuel
Y	Doncaster (2)	1568	£2 0s. 0d.		£2 0s. 0d.				
Y	Hedon	1563	£0 13s. 0d.		£0 13s. 0d.				Plus coal and peat
Y	Wakefield	1569	£1 0s. 0d.		£1 0s. 0d.				
Y	Ingerthorpe	1576	£0. 6s. 8d.			£0. 6s. 8d.			Plus a wagonload of timber
Y	Halsham (men)	1579	£4 0s. 0d.			£4 0s. 0d.			
Y	Halsham (women)	1579	£2 0s. 0d.			£2 0s. 0d.			

	Almshouse	Date	Stipend	1550s	1560s	1570s	1580s	1590s	Notes
Y	Sheriff Hutton	1581	Nil				Nil		
D	Sherburn	1171		£1 0s. 0d.*					*Plus full board & lodging
D	Greatham	1272		£1 1s. 6d.*					*Plus full board & lodging
D	Barnard Castle	c.1300		£3 15s. 0d..					Incl. 10s. fuel & £1 5s. clothing
D	Gateshead	c.1400		£0 16s. 0d.					
W	Stratford-upon-Avon	1417	£1 10s. 4d.	£0 17s. 4d.					Stipend reduced by Town
W	Bond's, Coventry	1507	£1 12s. 6d.	£1 12s. 6d.					
W	Ford's, Coventry	1509	£1 12s. 6d.	£1 12s. 6d.					
W	Coughton	1518	£1 10s. 4d.						
W	Lawrence Sherriff	1567	£1 10s. 4d.		£1 10s. 4d.				Plus gowns
W	Lord Leycester	1571	£4 0s. 0d.			£4 0s. 0d.			Plus gowns, fuel & dividends
W	Oken's, Warwick	1571	£0 4s. 0d.			£0 4s. 0d.			Plus gowns
W	Stoneleigh	1574	£2 12s. 0d.			£2 12s. 0d.			
W	Eyffler's, Warwick	1591	£0 4s. 0d.					£0 4s. 0d.	Plus gowns

	Almshouse	Date	Stipend	1600s	1610s	1620s	1630s	1640s	Notes
	Inflation Index (1451-1470 = 100)			527	583	585	687	723	**(From Appendix 5.1)**
	Minimum subsistence level with inflation			£2 15s. 0d.	£3 1s. 0d.	£3 1s. 2d.	£3 11s. 8d.	£3 15s. 6d.	**(From Appendix 5.2)**
K	St John's, Sandwich	1287			£0 12s. 4d.				
K	Maynard & Cotton's Spital, Canterbury	1604	£1 6s. 8d.		£1 6s. 8d.				
K	Aylesford	1605	High		£7 0s. 0d.				Income £60 p.a. ÷ 6
K	East Farleigh	1609	Nil	Nil					
K	New Romney	1610	£1 5s. 0d.		£1 5s. 0d.				Plus 3 dinners a year
K	Linton	1611	£0 13s. 4d.		£0 13s. 4d.				£2 13s. 4d. ÷ 4
K	Trinity Hospital, Greenwich	1613	Full board + £2 0s. 0d.		Full board + £2 0s. 0d.				Plus full board @ £9 12s. 8d. and £1 p.a. clothing
K	Mendfield's, Faversham	1614	£4 0s. 0d.		£4 0s. 0d.				
K	Brasted	1618	Nil		Nil				
K	Lenham	1622	£6 13s. 4d.			£6 13s. 4d.			
K	Willard's, Westerham	1623	Nil			Nil			
K	Sandwich	1625	Not fixed			Not fixed			
K	Elham	1631	Nil				Nil		
K	Forde's, Faversham	1633	Nil				Nil		
K	Godmersham	1635	Nil				Nil		
K	Wye	1642	£0 6s. 0d.					£0 6s.0d.	
K	Harrietsham	1646	£6 0s. 0d.					£6 0s.0d.	
K	Tonbridge	1648	Nil					Nil	
B	Chenies	1605	£5 0s. 0d.	£5 0s. 0d.					
B	Gt Marlow		£1 0s. 0d.	£1 0s. 0d.*					*Plus full maintenance?
B	Shenley (men)	1607	£4 11s. 0d.	£4 11s. 0d.					Plus gowns & garden plot each
B	Shenley (women)	1607	£3 0s. 8d.	£3 0s. 8d.					Plus gowns & garden plot each
B	Chesham	1624	£7 10s. 0d.			£7 10s. 0d.			

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	Almshouse	Date	Stipend	1600s	1610s	1620s	1630s	1640s	Notes
B	Langley Marish	1631	£3 15s. 0d.				£3 15s. 0d.		
B	Middle Claydon		£2 12s. 0d.				£2 12s. 0d.		
B	Croke, Studley	1639	£5 4s. 0d.				£5 4s. 0d.		Plus garden, coals & clothing
N	Thetford	1567	£2 12s. 0d.		£5 4s 0d.				Plus 10s. for gown every year
N	Castle Rising	1608	£7 0s. 0d?	£7 0s. 0d?					
N	Great Yarmouth	1610	Nil		Nil				
N	Watton	1612	£1 5s. 0d.*		£1 5s. 0d.*				*Per couple
N	Saham Toney	1612	£1 5s. 0d.*		£1 5s. 0d.*				*Per couple
N	Stow Bardolph	1625	£2 12s. 0d.			£2 12s. 0d.			
N	Walpole St Peter	1630	£3 4s. 0d.				£3 4s. 0d.		1s. per week in summer, 1s. 4d. in winter, 3s. 4d. for coal
N	Wilby	1637	Nil				Nil		
Y	Heslington	1605	£5 0s. 0d.	£5 0s. 0d.					
Y	Firby, Bedale	1608	£3 0s. 0d.	£3 0s. 0d.					Plus clothing worth 16s.
Y	Watter's, York	1612	£2 0s. 0d.		£2 0s. 0d.				
Y	Kippax	1613	£3 6s. 8d.		£3 6s. 8d.				
Y	Long Preston	1615	£2 0s. 0d.		£2 0s. 0d.				Plus garden plot each
Y	Bishop Burton	1615	£4 0s. 0d.		£4 0s. 0d.				
Y	Snaith	1617	£3 6s. 8d.		£3 6s. 8d.				
Y	Pontefract	1620	£0 10s. 0d.			£0 10s. 0d.			Plus gardens & 12 horseloads of coal ÷ 4
Y	Scarborough	1627	Nil				Nil		
Y	Beverley	1636	£2 10s. 0d.				£2 10s. 0d.		
Y	Ecclesfield	1639	£5 0s. 0d.				£5 0s. 0d.		
Y	Doncaster (3)	1621	£0 13s. 4d.			£0 13s. 4d.			
Y	Ingram's, York	1641	£5 0s. 0d.					£5 0s. 0d.	Plus gown every 2 years
Y	Halifax	1645	£2 0s. 0d.					£2 10s. 0d.	Includes 10s. for clothing
D	Darlington (1)	1632	Nil				Nil		
D	Darlington (2)	1636	Nil				Nil		
D	Frosterley	1641	£1 5s. 0d.					£1 10s. 0d.	Including 5s. fuel
W	Bond's, Coventry	1507	£1 12s. 6d.					£7 6s. 0d.	Stipend increased by Town
W	Ford's, Coventry	1509	£1 12s. 6d.				£5 4s. 0d.		Stipend increased by Town

	Almshouse	Date	Stipend	1650s	1660s	1670s	1680s	1690s	Notes
Inflation Index (1451-1470 = 100)				**687**	**702**	**675**	**631**	**737**	**(From Appendix 5.1)**
Minimum subsistence level with inflation				**£3 11s. 8d.**	**£3 13s. 4d.**	**£3 10s. 6d.**	**£3 6s. 6d.**	**£3 17s. 0d.**	**(From Appendix 5.2)**
K	St C. Rochester	1315						£1 6s. 0d.	In 1717
K	Hackington	1570	£2 12s. 0d.					£1 10s. 0d.	
K	Longport	1656	£4 0s. 0d.	£4 0s. 0d.					
K	Lewisham	1658	£4 11s. 0d.		£4 11s. 0d.				Plus gown of 18s. every 2nd year
K	Cogan's, Canterbury	1658	Nil		Nil				
K	Lewisham	1658	£4 11s. 0d.	£4 11s. 0d.					Plus a gown
K	Cowden	1665	Nil		Nil				
K	Bromley College	1666	£20 0s. 0d.		£20 0s. 0d.				
K	Goodneston	1671	Not fixed			Not fixed			£5 in 1748
K	Banks', Maidstone	1679	£5 0s. 0d.			£5 0s. 0d.			
K	Philipots, Eltham	1680	£2 0s. 0d.				£2 0s. 0d..		£5 intended
K	Tanners Green, Faversham	1690	Nil					Nil	
K	Beckenham	1694	Nil					Nil	
K	Morden College	1695	£40 0s. 0d.					£40 0s. 0d.	Later reduced to £15 p.a.
K	Pembury	1702?	£12 0s. 0d.					£12 0s. 0d.	In 1702
B	Croke, Studley	1639	£5 4s. 0d.	£6 14s. 0d.			£5 4s. 0d.		Plus garden, coals & clothing
N	Brooke	1657	£1 6s. 0d.	£1 6s. 0d					
Y	Tadcaster	1652	£2 12s. 0d.	£2 12s. 0d.					To maintain existing almsman
Y	Coxwold	1653	£2 4s. 0d.	£2 4s. 0d.					
Y	Whitby	1654	£7 0s. 0d?	£7 0s. 0d?					
Y	Monk Bretton	1654	£2 0s. 0d.	£2 10s. 0d.					Includes 10s p.a. for clothing
Y	Middleton's, York	1658	£4 0s. 0d.	£4 0s. 0d.					
Y	Catterick	1658	£3 6s. 8d	£3 6s. 8d.					Clothing/fuel if enough income
Y	Arksey	1659	£5 0s. 0d.	£5 0s. 0d.					
D	Cosin's, Auckland	1662	£4 0s. 0d.		£4 0s. 0d.				Plus cloaks worth £3 6s. 8d. every three years

	Almshouse	Date	Stipend	1650s	1660s	1670s	1680s	1690s	Notes
D	Cosin's, Durham	1666	£6 13s. 4d.		£6 13s. 4d.				Plus 15s. fuel each year & gowns worth £5 every 3 years
D	Houghton-le-Spring	1666	£3 6s. 8d.		£3 6s. 8d.				
D	Romaldkirk	1674	£2 0s. 0d.			£2 0s. 0d.			Plus gowns & 5s. of fuel
D	John Duck's	1685	£3 8s. 8d.				£3 8s. 8d.		
D	Sedgefield	1702	£4 0s. 0d.						£4 0s. 0d. plus 8s. gowns (1702)
W	Lord Leycester, Warwick	1571	£4 0s. 0d.					£50 0s 0d?	Dividends from rents etc shared by Brethren
W	Leamington Hastings	1607	?				£4 0s. 0d.	£4 6s. 8d.	Plus fuel
W	Holtes, Aston	1655	£5 4s. 0d.	£5. 4s. 0d					Plus gowns & fuel
W	Priory, Alcester	1659	Nil	Nil					£2 0s. 0d. endowed in 1702
W	Lady Leveson's	1671	£8 0s. 0d.			£8 0s. 0d.			Plus two gowns
W	Bleachfield, Alcester	1680	Nil				Nil		£2 0s. 0d. endowed in 1702
W	Shustoke	1699	£2 0s. 0d.					£2 0s. 0d	
W	Chamberlain's	1715	£3 18s. 0d.					£3 18s. 0d.	£3 18s. 0d. in 1715 plus 4s. fuel

K - Kent   B - Buckinghamshire   N - Norfolk   Y - Yorkshire   D - County Durham   W - Warwickshire

Below minimum subsistence level

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